INDIAN SCULPTURE AND PAINTING

E. B. HAVELL

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FRONTISPIECE

A PORTRAIT GROUP

By one of Shah Jahan's Court painters

INDIAN SCULPTURE AND PAINTING

ILLUSTRATED BY TYPICAL MASTERPIECES

WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THEIR MOTIVES AND IDEALS

BY E. B. HAVELL

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LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1908

PRINTED BY
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.,
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.

TO ARTISTS, ART WORKERS

AND THOSE WHO RESPECT ART

THIS ATTEMPT TO VINDICATE INDIA'S POSITION

IN THE FINE ARTS

IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is artistic, not archæological; but I have ventured to differ entirely from archæological ideas of Indian fine art, which seem to me to give a completely distorted view of the intentions of Indian artists. It is not extraordinary that these archæological conclusions have hitherto been tacitly accepted by the few European experts who have worked for art in India; for those who are preoccupied with their own work and own ideas of art, and prejudiced by their education in Western academies, are naturally inclined to regard with complacency the influence and affluence which the present popular opinion of Indian fine art brings to them.

I do not anticipate that all my fellow-artists in Europe will at once accept the views which have forced themselves upon me gradually, and after long years of study. Having entered upon my study of Indian art with a full equipment of European academic prejudices, I know that they are not easily shaken off. No European can appreciate Indian art who does not divest himself of his Western prepossessions, endeavour to

understand Indian thought, and place himself at the Indian point of view. I am convinced that those who do so will find my artistic conclusions inevitable; but there will always be many who believe it more interesting to use the wrong end of the telescope.

For historical and archæological facts I have consulted the best authorities, and endeavoured to avail myself of the latest researches. I have not attempted anything like a history, in the ordinary sense of the word, but an explanation. In the first attempt to deal with a subject covering so wide a field, and artistically almost unexplored, there are many difficulties. I have been obliged to leave untouched much that is necessary for a full treatment of it, but I hope I have succeeded in showing that the Indian ideal is not, as archæologists call it, a decadent and degenerate copy of a Græco-Roman prototype; that Indian fine art is not, as an Anglo-Indian critic puts it, a form of artistic cretinism, but an opening into a new world of æsthetic thought, full of the deepest interest, and worthy of the study of all Western artists.

I hope, also, that this book may save from oblivion and from the tender mercies of the ignorant Philistine the unique collection of the Calcutta Art Gallery. I still look forward to the time when our whole administrative policy in India will be guided by intelligent and consistent views of art; though, as the principal artistic

errors in it were pointed out by Fergusson more than fifty years ago, the hope may seem to be a vain one. The ruthless vandalism which prevailed in his time has been checked. We no longer desecrate and destroy the masterpieces of the Moguls and the great monuments of ancient India: we patch them up and try to admire them. But there is still that insidious form of vandalism in our departmental system—much more cruel and deadly than active iconoclasm, because it acts through mind instead of matter—which continues blindly to crush out the means by which India might yet surpass the greatness of her ancient art.

When Great Britain's responsibility in this matter is recognised, the grievous wrong we unthinkingly do to Indian art and craft will command the attention it deserves. But my main object is to help educated Indians to a better understanding of their own national art, and to give them that faith and pride in it without which the wisest measures that any Government could devise will always be thrown away. After all, the future of Indian art is in their keeping, and they have dealt with it more cruelly than any Europeans have ever done.

Even if, for Europeans who think like Macaulay, all Indian art should be worthless, it will always remain a priceless boon for Indians, offering them something which the best European art can never give them. Let Indians of the present generation, who through Macaulay's narrow and short-sighted

policy have never enjoyed this precious heritage see that their children are put in possession of it.

I am deeply indebted to His Honour Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and to Mr. A. Earle, I.C.S., Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, for their sympathy and support in the publication of this book. My friend and colleague, Mr. Abanindro Nath Tagore, whose artistic work is reviewed in the last chapter, has given me valuable help by his knowledge of Sanskrit literature. I owe also acknowledgments for courteous assistance to Dr. J. D. E. Schmeltz, Director of the Ethnographic Museums, Leyden; Mr. G. P. Rouffaer, of The Hague; Mr. E. A. Von Saher, Director of the Colonial Museum, Haarlem; Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy; Mr. Stanley Clarke, Director of the Indian Section, Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington; Dr. Müller and Dr. A. von Lecoq, of the Royal Ethnographic Museum, Berlin; Mr. F. W. Thomas, Librarian, and Mr. T. W. Arnold, Assistant Librarian, India Office; and to Mr. E. Thurston, Superintendent, Central Museum, Madras. I must also thank Mr. W. Griggs, who has spared no efforts in the extremely difficult task of reproducing in colours the minute and delicate work of the Mogul miniature painters, and Mr. Imre G. Schwaiger, of Delhi and Simla, to whose exertions the Calcutta Art Gallery owes some of its choicest treasures.

January 1908.

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SCULPTURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"Quand on veut comprendre un art, il faut regarder l'âme du public auquel il s'adressait."—H. TAINE, *Voyage en Italie.*

NOTHING is more significant of the gulf which separates East from West than the general ignorance of Europe regarding the ideals of Indian art. India, unlike Europe, has a still living, traditional, and national art, intimately bound up with the social and religious life of the people; and this art, if we knew it better, might help both Europeans and Indians to a closer mutual sympathy and understanding. But the secularised and denationalised art of Europe has no affinity with the living art of India, and we, aliens in race, thought, and religion, have never taken anything but a *dilettante*, archæological, or commercial interest in it. Its deeper meanings are hidden from us, and those spiritual longings and desires, which come straight from the heart of a people, to find expression in their poetry, music, and their art, strike no chord of sympathy in ours.

Indian art, to most of us, means only a pretty chintz, a rich brocade, or gorgeous carpet, fantastic carving, or curious inlay; and an ancient architecture, fascinating to the tourist and archæologist, with its reminiscences of bygone pomp and splendour, but generally regarded as an extinct art, useless for the needs of our prosaic and practical times.

The appreciation of Indian sculpture and painting by the great majority of Europeans has not hitherto been carried further than one of these hypotheses:

I. That the old Indian schools of sculpture and painting have never reached the higher planes of artistic expression, as sculpture and painting are understood in Europe, or as represented by Indian architecture, which is acknowledged to be sometimes of very high artistic merit.

II. That, if they have reached such higher planes, all traces of the results they achieved, and of the traditions which produced them, have been irretrievably lost.

The first of these hypotheses implies an intellectual anomaly almost unparalleled in the whole of art-history. If we except those countries and epochs in which Muhammadan rulers enforced the strict letter of their religious law which forbade the representation of animate nature in art, there is no instance of any nation producing great schools of architecture which has been without corresponding schools of sculpture or painting.

It is *primâ facie* incredible that a highly developed civilisation, spreading over thousands of years and over a vast area like India, which has produced a splendid literature and expressed lofty ideals in building materials, should have lacked the capacity, or found no occasion for giving them expression in materials for painting or sculpture. Nevertheless, this remains the popular opinion of Europe with regard to Indian art, and it is the hypothesis which has governed our whole educational policy in India, since universities, museums, art galleries, and schools of art were established under British rule. To suggest that an Indian art student will find in Indian art all the higher inspiration which he has been taught to seek only in the great schools of Europe is a novel proposition, opposed to all the accepted theories of orientalists.

Mr. Vincent Smith, whose "Early History of India" is one of the classics of oriental research, in the following words voices the usual Anglo-Indian view of Indian fine art, and the reasoned opinion of orientalists: "The Gandhara, or Peshawur sculptures . . . would be admitted, by most persons competent to form an opinion, to be the best specimens of the plastic art ever known to exist in India. Yet even these are only echoes of the second-rate Roman art of the third and fourth centuries. In the elaboration of minute, intricate, and often extremely pretty, ornamentation on stone, it is true, the Indian

artists are second to none. The stone-cutters in Gandhara and at Amarâvati display the same skill in drawing elaborate patterns, and the same skill in executing them, which we now admire in the work of the modern carpet-weavers and vase-makers. But in the expression of human passions and emotions Indian art has completely failed, except during the time when it was held in Græco-Roman leading-strings, and it has scarcely, at any time, essayed an attempt to give visible form to any divine ideal."[1]

Many archæologists have devoted themselves to unravelling the historical, ethnological, and mythological problems connected with Indian art, but art, *quâ* art, rarely receives any attention from them. They have been contented with this assumption: that sculpture and painting, as fine arts, were introduced into India by the Greeks and Romans, and ceased to have any importance when that Western influence was withdrawn. We might say, with even greater justification, that all our English Gothic architecture is French or German, and describe the builders of St. Mark's at Venice as the creators of later Italian art.

It is of course true that every nationality, when it seeks to work out its artistic ideals, makes use

[1] "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," vol. lviii., p. 172. In justice to Mr. Vincent Smith, it must be said that his more recent writings seemed to show a higher appreciation of Indian art than is here expressed, but the passage above quoted is still a faithful reflection of the official and unofficial views of Indian art which dominate our whole artistic policy.

of any agents, native or foreign, which happen to be within reach. But the Greeks no more created Indian sculpture and painting than they created Indian philosophy and religion. Their æsthetic ideals were essentially different from those of India, and they never at any time imposed them upon Indian art, which, in its distinctive and essential character, is entirely the product of Indian thought and Indian artistic genius.

It is a well-established tradition among Anglo-Indians to take for granted that there has always been a peculiar intellectual hiatus in the Indian mind, which has at all times prevented any great development of the fine arts. And whenever any striking example, appealing to popular European sentiment, seems to prove the contrary, the suggestion that it is due to Western influence is sure to be accepted as sufficient and wholly satisfactory. A familiar instance of this is the attribution of the Mogul masterpiece, the Taj at Agra, to an Italian adventurer at the court of Shah Jahan. The evidence on which this story is based is, as I have endeavoured to show,[1] absurdly unsubstantial, and utterly unworthy of credence.

It was not until Sir William Jones translated *Sakuntala* that modern Europe began to give India the credit of any literature worth serious attention, except that of a philosophic or ritualistic character; and as literary interests are far more

[1] "The Taj and its Designers," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, June 1903.

widespread and influential than those which are purely artistic, it is natural that they should take precedence in the progress of mutual understanding between the East and West. There are also many special reasons why Indian fine art should have remained so long a *terra incognita* to Europeans.

In the first place, Indian artistic expression begins from a starting-point far removed from that of the European. Only an infinitesimal number of Europeans, even of those who pass the best part of their lives in India, make any attempt to understand the philosophic, religious, mythological, and historical ideas of which Indian art is the embodiment; and without some understanding of these even a trained artist will never be a competent or impartial critic of Indian art.

Before we can hope to understand either Indian art or literature we must first of all come down from the pedestal of superiority from which we love to declare that the oriental mind is inscrutable. It is not really so incomprehensible as it seems to be at that elevation, and, as Sir M. Monier-Williams pertinently observes: "Unless we seek to understand the inhabitants, unless we think it worth while to study their ancient literatures, their religious ideas, and their time-honoured institutions, unless we find in them something to admire and respect, we can never look forward hopefully to the time when the present lamentable partition wall which

obstructs the free intercourse of social relations between European and Asiatic races will be entirely removed."[1]

Art is, in one sense, a universal language, but the finer inflections of it are so intimately associated with national life and thought that no one can pretend to understand any distinctly national phase of it who stands entirely aloof from its national environment.

Art, moreover, in Europe is made a subject of special study and exegesis by writers of the first rank. Every school of sculpture and painting, and every great artist, have their biographers and interpreters. Magnificent collections, both public and private, are open to students of works of art, so that it is easy for any educated person to have at least a superficial acquaintance with European art-history, and an intelligent understanding of artistic thought and expression. The profession of an artist is an honourable one, and there are organised associations of artists which can, and do to some extent, influence and direct public opinion in art matters.

All these facilities and advantages are wanting in India. There is not yet a single Museum in the world in which Indian art can be properly appreciated or understood. An Indian museum, well organised on artistic, instead of archæological or commercial lines, would be as astonishing a revelation to artistic Europe as the discovery of

[1] Preface to translation of *Sakuntala*, 7th edit.

the Hindu drama was to European *literati*. But Great Britain seems quite content to leave the discoverer of Indian fine art to France, or Germany, or to American millionaires. The British Museum shows the stolid British indifference to the spiritual ideals of our Empire in the East. The museums in India, generally speaking, are equally unconcerned with them. South Kensington hardly recognises Indian art, except in its commercial and industrial aspects. Standard books on Indian mythology, like Moor's "Indian Pantheon," and typical collections, like that of the Indian Institute at Oxford, give one the impression that all Indian sculpture is barbarous, obscene, or trivial, and that painting as a fine art is almost unknown in India. This is also the impression which the great majority of Anglo-Indians bring back with them to Europe.

France shows a more intelligent and artistic appreciation of Indian æsthetic culture. In Germany many distinguished savants are keenly exploiting the artistic treasures of the East, with the active support and personal interest of the German Emperor. Berlin is now the only centre where the early schools of Asiatic painting, from which modern Chinese and Japanese painting were derived, can be studied. At Haarlem and Leyden one can gather some idea of the wonderful sculpture wrought by Indian artists in Java. But no collection exists which will give to an art-student a tolerably adequate conception of the

masterpieces of Indian painting and sculpture, or of those higher ideals towards which the whole art of Asia has been for ever striving.

It has hardly ever occurred to Indians of former times that the national art, which was the outward and visible expression of national culture and sentiment, required any written exegesis or history. Nor, indeed, does a truly national art require the aid of literature, for it is in itself a history and an explanation. In the present day what we call education in India stands so far aloof from all artistic culture that no Indian has ever come forward to expound the philosophy of Indian art, or to assert its rightful place by the side of the great æsthetic schools of the world. The name of Bôrôbudûr, where the story of the Light of Asia is told in one of the grandest epics man ever carved in stone, conveys no more meaning to an English-educated Indian than Athens or Rome would to an intelligent Eskimo or Laplander.

CHAPTER II

THE DEGRADATION OF INDIAN ART

INDIAN art, moreover, has been for two and a half centuries under a political, social, and intellectual ban unparalleled in history. What would be the state of the fine arts in Europe at the present day, if, several centuries ago, an autocratic ruler had closed all the art-galleries, museums, academies, and schools of art which might have existed, ordered all pictures to be burnt and sculpture to be broken, and proscribed the profession of an artist as irreligious; if then, after a period of general anarchy, during which all national art-traditions had been nearly obliterated, a committee of the American Senate, or of graduates of the Calcutta University, were placed in authority and constituted by public opinion as the chief arbiters of artistic taste and fashion?

To an artist unacquainted with Indian conditions the proposition may seem grotesque, but it does, in fact, give a not inaccurate representation of the position of the fine arts in India to-day. We have here a striking example of that over-

centralisation which has grown to be such a serious political danger in India, and is at last attracting the attention of the highest authorities. No other parts of the official machinery have failed so miserably, or wrought so much serious mischief in Indian institutions as those which are concerned, directly or indirectly, with art and craft.

From the latter half of the seventeenth century, during Aurangzîb's iconoclastic rule, the artist families, both Hindu and Muhammadan, which had enjoyed the enlightened patronage of the Mogul Court since the days of Babar, found themselves deprived of all State encouragement and denounced as infidels and heretics. The masterpieces of Indian sculpture and fresco-painting were mutilated and defaced on the ground that they offended against the precepts of the faith, and very few indeed have escaped the ruthless hands of Aurangzîb's fanatical followers. The painter and sculptor found their occupation gone, save in the few Hindu states which retained their independence; but even these were too much occupied in the struggle for liberty to devote much attention to the cultivation of the fine arts.

After the death of Aurangzîb anarchy and misrule prevailed over the greater part of India. The images of gold, silver, gilded copper, and bronze—the precious substances in which, according to Hindu and Buddhist ritual, the sacred simulacra were fashioned—would always be tempting booty, and no doubt consigned to the

melting-pot, to furnish cash or weapons, whenever the hordes of marauders, Indian and European, which ravaged the country from one end to the other, could lay their hands upon them. In the general insecurity of life and property, neither literary nor artistic culture found any protection or foothold.

It might have been supposed that the restoration of law and order under British rule, would have revived conditions at least favourable to the material prosperity of the fine arts. But the interests of England in India at that time were purely commercial, and Europe was too convinced of the intellectual inferiority of oriental races to take much interest in anything Indian which was not a marketable commodity. The affectation of classic taste, which at the close of the eighteenth century was much stronger among cultured Englishmen than it is now, could not recognise art except in a mask borrowed from Greek or Roman antiquity.

So Indian artists received even less recognition from their new masters than they had from Aurangzîb and his Muhammadan satraps. The wealthy Indians who wished to stand well with the British raj commenced to copy the fashions of their masters, building huge palaces in imitation of the English mansions of the period, and decorating the state apartments in which they received their European guests with oil-paintings and statuary imported from Europe. In this way

not only was a great deal of patronage diverted from Indian artists into foreign channels, but a false standard of taste and an archæological prescription of art, entirely vicious and destructive to indigenous culture and artistic tradition, were created, making India at the present day the happy hunting-ground of every artistic charlatan, European or Indian.

The owners of these pretentious palaces did not find in them any sense of superior comfort or convenience, for they seldom occupied more than a corner of them; and the bad copies or counterfeits of European pictures, palmed off as originals by unscrupulous dealers, were not considered or treated as works of art, but only as a necessary part of the quasi-European upholstery.

As British influence and power extended, the credit of Indian art fell lower and lower. The Indian public works system, by creating a monopoly in Government buildings and prescribing for them a pseudo-classic or Gothic style, has deprived the Indian master-builder of his employment, degraded the noblest of all the arts into a common trade, and gone far to extinguish the living traditions of some of the finest architecture the world has seen.

Still more fatal to national culture and art has been the influence of European universities in India. Founded originally only to supply the demand of Government offices for English-speaking clerks, they have confined their scope to

glorification of clerical accomplishments and utilitarian aims, at the expense of all the higher artistic faculties. Academic distinctions, as well as the honours and emoluments of Government service, are restricted to the scholastic, legal, engineering, and medical professions. The "failed" matriculate of the Calcutta University, with his new-found text-book wisdom, and perhaps some scraps of modern studio jargon picked up at second hand, looks down with scorn upon the hereditary artist who voices Indian national traditions—traditions which, even dimmed and tarnished as they are, still outshine in truth, sincerity, and spirituality, all that India knows of Western art.

The artistic castes, fallen into discredit as exponents of national culture, either join in the general scramble for Government clerkships, or accept the choice offered them of becoming mechanical copyists of European commercial art, or of manufacturing the cheap bric-à-brac which passes for Indian art in the European market. In some of the native states, however, more especially in Rajputana and in Mysore, there is still some demand for their services as artists; and herein at present lies the best, if not the only, hope for Indian art.

This is the situation which the Government Schools of Art, established in India for the last fifty years, have had to face. On the assumption that Indian painting and sculpture have never found a much higher degree of poetic expression

than that represented by pure ornament—or the stage reached by all uncivilised and uncultivated races—it would seem that the usual European system of art-teaching is entirely reasonable and logical in India. On the other hand, if there really has been for 5,000 years this remarkable hiatus in the Indian intellect, which the European assumes and the English-educated Indian accepts without question, the work of English artists who may have charge of these schools will always be peculiarly dreary and unprofitable; for, though the technique of drawing, painting, and sculpture can be acquired by almost any average intelligence through diligence and perseverance, mere proficiency in technique will no more produce artists than practice in rhyming will create poets. When, therefore, in 1896 I took charge of the Calcutta Government Art Gallery, which up to that time had contained only a very mediocre and miscellaneous collection of European pictures, I began an attempt to place the study of Indian art upon a proper footing by arranging a collection of Indian ornament, architecture, painting, and sculpture in proper correlation as a connected whole, thus completing the curious truncated pyramid usually exhibited to the world as the art of India.

The Gallery, in spite of many difficulties, now possesses some important materials for the study of Indian sculpture and painting. Among them are some fine examples from Nepal and Tibet

of the Hindu-Buddhist art which was the art of Northern India in the early centuries of our era, an epoch of the greatest importance in the art-history of the world.

At the beginning of the Christian era, and for some centuries previously, when the classic art of Europe had already passed its zenith, India was drawing in towards herself a great flood of artistic culture from Western Asia, derived originally from the far-distant sources of Babylon and Assyria, but strongly tinged with the subsidiary stream which was then flowing back into it from Greece and Rome. Out of these eclectic influences, joined with the old indigenous traditions, Indian religious thought quickly formulated a new synthesis of art, which in its turn became the source from which other great currents flowed north, south, east, and west.

In these early centuries of the Christian era, and from this Indian source, came the inspiration of the great schools of Chinese painting which from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries stood first in the whole world. Successive hordes of Asiatic invaders, beginning with those which flocked like vultures to gather the spoils of the decaying Roman Empire, kept open the highways between East and West, and brought a reflex of the same traditions into Europe. The influence of India's artistic culture can be clearly traced, not only in Byzantine art, but in the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. Europe is very apt to dwell

upon the influence of Western art and culture upon Asiatic civilisation, but the far greater influence of Asiatic thought, religion, and culture upon the art and civilisation of Europe is rarely appraised at its proper value.

From the seaports of her western and eastern coasts India at this time also sent streams of colonists, missionaries, and craftsmen all over Southern Asia, Ceylon, Siam, and far-distant Kambodia. Through China and Korea Indian art entered Japan about the middle of the sixth century. About A.D. 603 Indian colonists from Gujerat brought Indian art into Java, and at Bôrôbudûr in the eighth and ninth centuries Indian sculpture achieved its greatest triumphs. Some day, when European art criticism has widened its present narrow horizon, and learnt the foolishness of using the art-standards of Greece and Italy as a tape wherewith to measure and appraise the communings of Asia with the Universal and the Infinite, it will grant the nameless sculptors of Bôrôbudûr an honourable place among the greatest artists the world has ever known.

Among the other great works which this age produced were the sculptures of Ellora and Elephanta, the frescoes of the Ajanta school, and the splendid paintings recently unearthed by Professor Grünwedel and Dr. von Lecoq, which will throw a new flood of light upon the art-history of Asia. It was the golden age of Indian literature, made famous by the noble Hindu epics, the

Râmâyana and Mahâbhârata, by *Sakuntala* and other masterpieces of the Sanskrit drama. It reached its culminating point about the time when Sankaracharya, the great Hindu philosopher and religious reformer, lived, or about the eighth century; and the first Muhammadan invasions of India ushered in its close. From this period, though Indian art continued to grow and flourish on Indian soil, it ceased to have much influence on the outside world until the palmy days of the Mogul Empire.

Nepal is almost the only part of India in which the traditions of this grand epoch of religious art, extending, roughly speaking, over the first millennium of the Christian era, has been continued down to modern times; for in India itself they have been either completely extirpated by the Muhammadans, or greatly modified under later Arab and Persian influences. Nepal was the refuge of the Buddhists and Hindu monks from the furious assaults of Islam in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and there many artistic treasures have escaped the Muhammadan iconoclasts of the time of Aurangzîb.

The great period of the secular schools of Indian painting was under the Mogul emperors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At this time India again became the art-centre of Asia. The religious zeal of the Sunni sects of Muhammadans, and the partiality for whitewash as an artistic process affected by most Anglo-

Indians, have destroyed nearly all traces of the fresco paintings which covered the walls of the Mogul palaces and villas. The best artistic records of this time now extant are the exquisite miniature paintings which were highly prized by the cultured *dilettanti* of the Mogul Court. With songs, music, and impromptu Persian sonnets, the odes of Sa'di and Hafiz, or the effusions of the Court poets, they served to while away many an idle hour in the luxurious palaces of the Great Mogul, and in the elegant villas of his nobles.

The Calcutta Art Gallery now possesses one of the finest collections of these Indian miniature paintings, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the classic period of Mogul art in India, down to the present day; a few of them were transferred to the Victoria Memorial by Lord Curzon's orders, to form the nucleus of an historical collection. The Khuda Bux Library at Bankipur has also a splendid collection, formed with great taste and discrimination. The Lahore Museum has an interesting collection of portraits. The Maharajah of Jaipur possesses some fine examples from Akbar's collection; and the Maharajah of Alwar and some other Indian Princes have examples of great artistic value.

In Europe there are several more or less important private collections, among which that belonging to Colonel H. B. Hanna, now in the Newcastle Art Gallery, is the most interesting. The British Museum; the Victoria and Albert

Museum, South Kensington; the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin; the Institute of France, and the National Library, Paris, have small collections, but that of the Calcutta Art Gallery is the only important one which has been formed on strictly artistic principles.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE IDEAL IN INDIAN ART

BEFORE any one, be he artist or layman, attempts to draw any comparison between Indian and European art, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the essential difference between the European and the Indian starting-points in the higher planes of artistic expression. The common philosophic basis of art in all countries assumes that art is not merely an imitation or record of facts and phenomena in Nature, but an interpretation—the effort of the human mind to grasp the inner beauty and meaning of the external facts of Nature.

Nature, to the European, is always an obvious reality which must be studied, exploited, and analysed, so that the exact composition of every organic and inorganic element in it may be ascertained and explained. In the degenerate popular art of to-day, which exists only to amuse and distract an uncultivated and unthinking section of the public, an art which is also affected by those Indians who put on European culture as they put

on a new suit of clothes, this scientific study of Nature's facts has led to the common view that imitation is the real and only end of all fine art.

Realism to the Indian artist has a different meaning from what we attach to it; for Indian philosophy regards all we see in Nature as transitory, illusive phenomena, and declares that the only reality is the Divine Essence, or Spirit. So, while European art hardly concerns itself with the Unseen, but limits its mental range to the realm of Nature, and thus retains, even in its highest flights, the sense and form of its earthly environment, Indian art (like the Egyptian, of which it is the living representative) is always striving to realise something of the Universal, the Eternal, and the Infinite.

European art has, as it were, its wings clipped: it knows only the beauty of earthly things. Indian art, soaring into the highest empyrean, is ever trying to bring down to earth something of the beauty of the things above.

The Greeks, and the artists of the Renaissance who followed in their footsteps, attempted to arrive at the highest type of beauty by a selection of what appeared to them to be the most admirable in various types of humanity, and in natural forms and appearances. Physical beauty was to the Greeks a divine characteristic; the perfect human animal received divine honours from them, both before and after death.

The Hindu artist has an entirely different

starting-point. He believes that the highest type of beauty must be sought after, not in the imitation, or selection, of human or natural forms, but in the endeavour to suggest something finer and more subtle than ordinary physical beauty. Mere bodily strength and mundane perfections of form are rarely glorified in Indian art. When the Indian artist models a representation of the Deity with an attenuated waist and abdomen, and suppresses all the smaller anatomical details so as to obtain an extreme simplicity of contour, the European draws a mental comparison with the ideas of Phidias or Michelangelo, and declares that the Indian is sadly ignorant of anatomy and incapable of imitating the higher forms of Nature.

But the Indian artist in the best period of Indian sculpture and painting was no more ignorant of anatomy than Phidias or Praxiteles. He would create a higher and more subtle type than a Grecian athlete or a Roman senator, and suggest that spiritual beauty which, according to his philosophy, can only be reached by the surrender of worldly attachments and the suppression of worldly desires.

Indian art is essentially idealistic, mystic, symbolic, and transcendental. The artist is both priest and poet. In this respect Indian art is closely allied to the Gothic art of Europe—indeed, Gothic art is only the Eastern consciousness expressing itself in a Western environment. But while the Christian art of the Middle Ages is

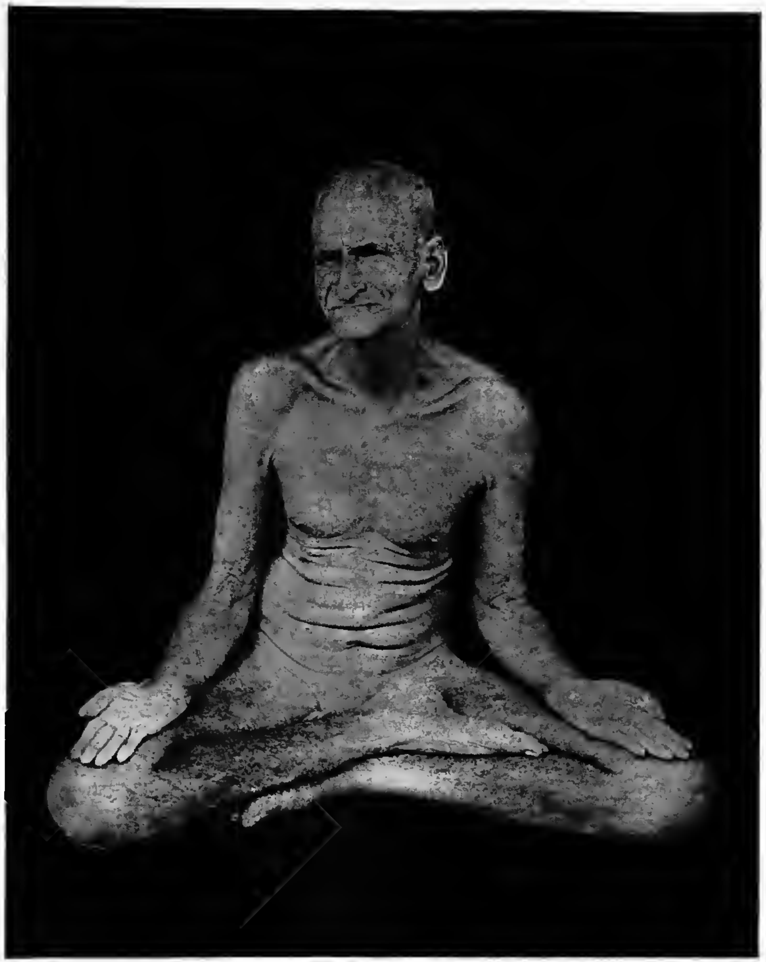
always emotional, rendering literally the pain of the mortification of the flesh, the bodily sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, Indian art appeals only to the imagination, and strives to realise the spirituality and abstraction of a supra-terrestrial sphere.

There is, and always will be, a wide gulf between these ideas and the naturalistic, materialistic view of the Renaissance, or the eclectic, archæological art of modern Europe—the cult of the studio, the lay figure, and the nude model.

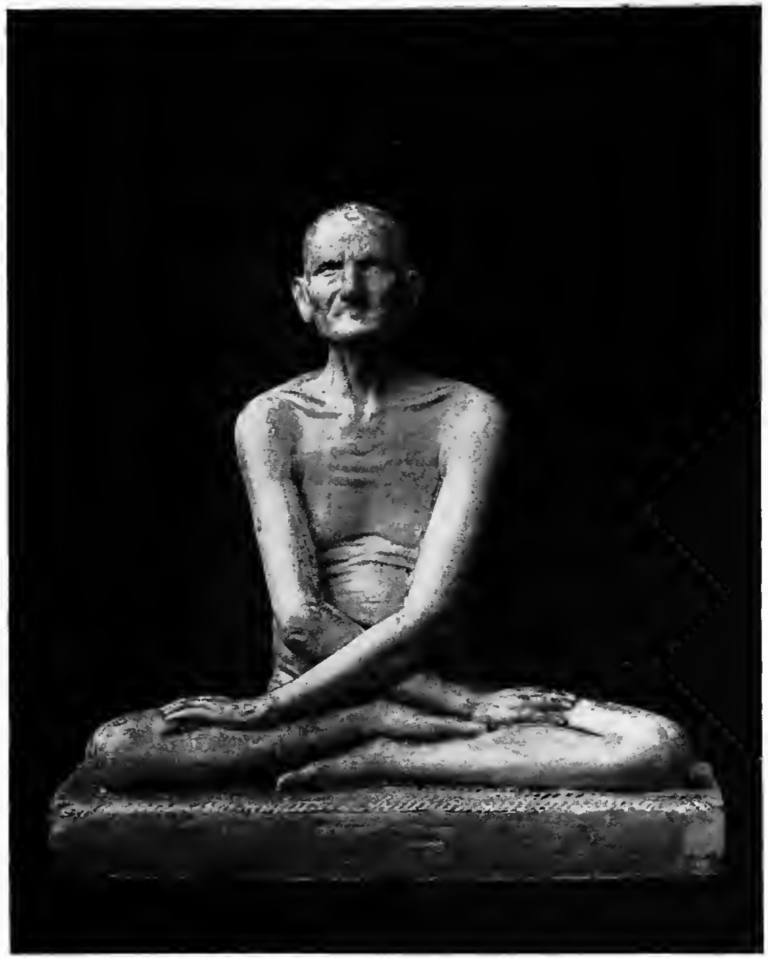
The highest ideals of every national art have always centred themselves round the national conception of the Deity, and it is the Indian conception of divine beauty which gives the key to all Indian æsthetic thought, and shows most clearly the essential differences between Eastern ideals and Western. The Greek, when he attempted to realise a divine ideal, took for his model a type of physical beauty, such as the athlete or the warrior. The Indian always takes the *Yogi*, the religious devotee who, by a system of spiritual exercises, enjoined by the Yoga school of philosophy, aims at freeing himself from worldly attachments and placing himself in communion with the Universal Self, the Supreme Soul—Brahman. Yet it is not the physical form of the Yogi which he endeavours to represent. His ideal is not made of common human clay. He only strives to materialise the subtler, purer Soul within.

It is remarkable that even Buddha himself, who renounced the ascetic life and whose philo-

PLATE I



(*a*) AN INDIAN YOGI. (*From a photograph*)



(*b*) DECADENT MODERN STATUETTE

sophy was essentially human and full of the love of nature, always was regarded by Indian people as the Great Yogi. The Eastern ideal never was supplanted by the Western, even when Greek influence was strongest. Frequently in Indian art a Hellenistic detail, mythological idea, and technical characteristic can be identified. But the influence of Hellenism in India was transient and superficial, affecting more the technique than the ideals of Indian art. It was speedily absorbed and moulded to the character of Eastern artistic genius, just as foreign influences have always been assimilated by the national art of European countries.

For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with the appearance of an Indian Yogi in the flesh, I give the illustration of a celebrated Brahmin Yogi of Benares, Swami Bhaskarânanda Saraswati, who at the age of 17 abandoned a large fortune, and exchanged brilliant worldly prospects for the life of an ascetic, practising the principles of Yoga.[1] He lived to an advanced age and is still

[1] It must not be supposed that the practice of Yoga is confined to ignorant fanatics, or to those who push the doctrine to the extreme of inflicting upon themselves all kinds of excessive bodily penances and tortures. The idea of intense concentration of mind, leading to extraordinary powers of spiritual insight, which is at the root of Yoga philosophy, still has almost as much hold upon cultured Hindus as it had at the time of Buddha, even upon those who have added Western science to their own traditional culture. Buddha's enlightenment was attained by the practice of Yoga, which was prevalent in India long before his time, though it was not reduced to a regular system until afterwards. See Monier-Williams, "Indian Wisdom," p. 226 *et seq.*

revered as a Hindu saint. The subject, according to European ideas, hardly seems one to lend itself to a high æsthetic ideal. Yet how beautiful it is when the spiritual, rather than the physical, becomes the type which the artist brings into view!

I will begin with the superb statue of Amogha-Siddha, a Dhyâni-Buddha,[1] which shows the Indian conception of the great heavenly Yogi. He is seated cross-legged in the Yogi attitude, with an expression of profound abstraction. The right hand, perfect in its technique, is lifted in making the mystic sign of blessing. This sculpture is from the north side of Bôrôbudûr,

[1] "The term Dhyāna (Jhāna) is a general expression for the four gradations of mystic meditation which have ethereal spaces or worlds corresponding to them, and a Dhyāni-Buddha is a Buddha who is supposed to exist as a kind of spiritual essence in these higher regions of abstract thought. That is to say, every Buddha who appears on earth in a temporal body—with the object of teaching men how to gain Nirvana—exists also in an ideal counterpart, or ethereal representation of himself in the formless worlds of meditation. These ideal Buddhas are as numerous as the human Buddhas, but as there are only five chief human Buddhas in the present age—Kraka-ććhanda, Kanaka-muni, Kāsyapa, Gautama, and the future Buddha, Maitreya—so there are only five corresponding Dhyāni Buddhas—Vairoćana, Akshobhya, Ratna-sambhava, Amitābha, and Amogha-siddha (sometimes represented in images as possessing a third eye). But this is not all. Each of them produces, by a process of evolution, a kind of emanation from himself called a Dhyāni-Bodhisattva, to act as the practical head and guardian of the Buddhist community between the death of each human Buddha and the advent of his successor. Hence there are the five Bodhisattvas—Samanta-bhadra, Vajrapāni, Ratnapāni, Padmapāni (Avalokiteshvara), and Vīsva-pāni—corresponding to the five Dhyāni-Buddhas, and the five earthly Buddhas respectively. In Nepal five corresponding female Sābetis or Tārā-devīs are named."—Sir M. Monier-Williams, "Buddhism," pp. 202, 203.



A DHYÂNI BUDDHA

(From Bôrôbudûr, Java)

in Java, but the art is Indian, of about the eighth century A.D.

The next plate (No. III.) is from a magnificent colossal Buddhist statue, of the same idealised Yogi type, representing Indian art in Ceylon, where it was originally brought, together with the Buddhist religion, by the missionaries of Asoka, about 242 B.C. It probably is intended for the earthly Buddha, Gautama, as he sat in meditation under the bodhi-tree at Gaya. The age of this statue is uncertain, but I would suppose it to be somewhat earlier than the last. In the finished style of its technique it is fully equal to the Javanese example, and even surpasses the latter in its beautiful proportions. Indian Buddhist sculpture has perhaps never produced any finer single statue than this.

The figure appears to be nude, but it is really, like the previous one, clad in a close-fitting, thin, diaphanous robe, which covers most of the figure except the right shoulder and arm. This peculiar drapery, which is very characteristic of the true Indian ideal of Buddha, as distinguished from the mixed type of China and Japan, is seen more clearly in the beautiful stone alto-relievo, Plate IV., of the earthly Buddha, Gautama, preaching to his first six converts after his enlightenment. This is probably somewhat later in date. It was recently discovered at Sarnath, near Benares, by Mr. F. O. Oertel, close to the spot where Buddha began to preach.

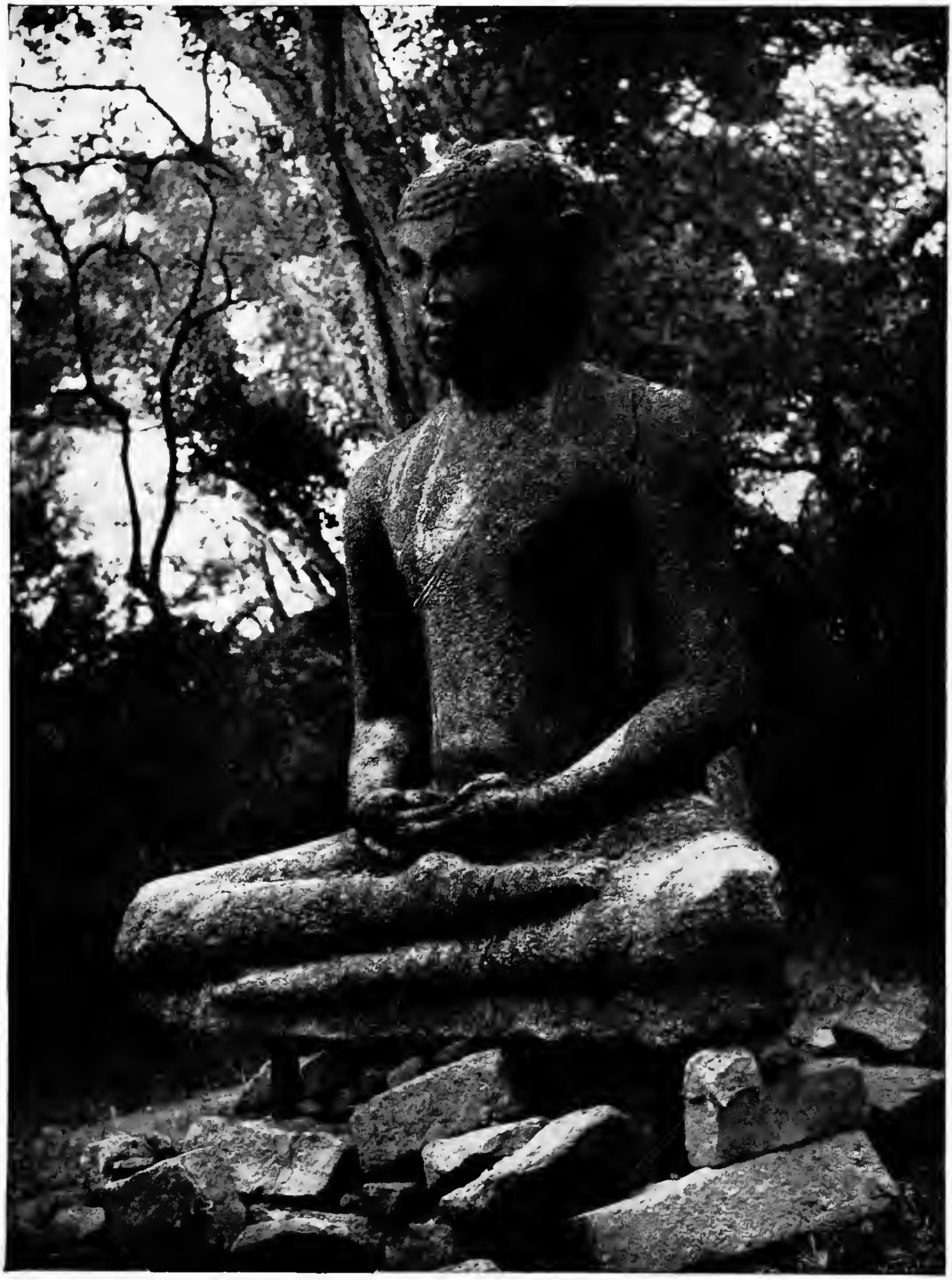
Probably several centuries later is the copper-gilt figure of the Bodhisattva Padmapâni, or Avalokiteshvara, "The Lord who looks down with pity," and the guardian deity of Tibet, of whom the Dalai Lama is said to be an incarnation; on it the metal-worker and jeweller have lavished their utmost skill. The original is in the Calcutta Art Gallery. The figure is entirely built up of hammered copper; the tiara and ornaments are set with rubies, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and crystals. The beautiful modelling of the hands is especially noticeable. The expression of the face suggests Mongolian influence, but the whole inspiration of the art is Indian, brought by Nepalese artists into Tibet about the seventh or eighth centuries A.D.

The next illustration, Plate VI., is from a Nepalese copper-gilt statuette, representing Dorje-chang, the Lamaist counterpart of the Bodhisattva Vajrapâni,[1] "the Wielder of the Thunderbolt," which is also in the Calcutta Art Gallery. It is, like the last, built up of hammered work, but is later in date, probably not much more than a century old, representing the traditions of the Buddhist art of India which have survived in Nepal and Tibet to the present day. It has all the spirituality and true religious sentiment of Italian fourteenth and fifteenth-century art.

Another statuette, cast in copper and gilt, Plate VII., shows the living, modern art of Nepal. Though inferior in execution, it has the same fine

[1] See note, p. 28.

PLATE III



GAUTAMA, THE EARTHLY BUDDHA

(From Anuradhapura, Ceylon)

feeling as the earlier art. It is distinguished by the graceful conventionalisation of the bo-tree—the tree of wisdom—disposed as a wreath round the figure of the Bodhisattva, who holds in his left hand the *amrita*, or nectar of immortality. At the foot of the pedestal are the quaint figures of the three devotees who have dedicated this image to some Nepalese shrine.

Historically, these six examples are of the highest interest, representing as they do the sequence of the purest Buddhist art-tradition for the last eleven hundred years in India, Ceylon, Java, Nepal, and Tibet.

In all of them it is easy to recognise the human prototype, but the grim, shrivelled Yogi is here transformed into a spiritual being of a higher sphere—as an alchemist turns base metal into gold—a form more subtly made than human ever was, and wrapped in the ideal beauty of Divinity.

The technical characteristics of all these examples are the same. The attenuated waist and a generalisation of the anatomy carried much further than the Greeks ever attempted, producing an extreme simplicity of form and contour, are part of a deliberate intention of suggesting a type of abstract, spiritual beauty, far removed from worldly passions and desires. At the same time the main anatomical structure relating to the mechanism of the human body is given with such perfect truth as to make it obvious

that the artists were quite capable of imitating nature, when imitation was their only object.

It is a wholly uninformed view of the divergence between the technical characteristics of European and Indian art to explain that Indian artists never learnt anatomy and drawing, for a thorough knowledge of artistic anatomy and the capacity to draw imitatively from nature are accomplishments within the power of very mediocre painters and sculptors, while Indian artists have frequently exhibited intellectual gifts of the rarest and highest order.

European artists with no knowledge of Indian philosophy have always erroneously supposed that this type of figure represented the nearest approach to the human form which Indian sculptors were capable of producing; and, since it falls far short of what Western art can show in mere imitative skill, they have treated Indian sculpture with contempt, as belonging to an inferior order of artistic expression.

Archæologists invariably refer to this type as "decadent" or "degenerate"; regarding the Græco-Roman type of Gandhara as the highest achievement of Buddhist art, because it approaches nearer to the Greek ideal. This habitual reference to Western standards and ideals in their criticism of oriental work frequently leads European critics astray, and generally makes them constitutionally incapable of doing justice to Indian art. It is always unsafe to assume that the Indian point of

PLATE IV



BUDDHA PREACHING

(From Sarnath)

view is the same as the European: the probability is that it will always be different.

Nothing is more firmly rooted in the mind of the educated Englishman than the idea that civilisation was a peculiar product of Greece; that the Greeks established æsthetic models for all times and all people, and that those who depart from them must be classed forthwith as decadents and degenerates. Because Indian sculptors and painters, after coming into contact with debased Græco-Roman art, deliberately formed their ideals upon a different art-philosophy, their work is treated by most Europeans as indicating a corrupt and depraved taste which places them beyond the pale of criticism.

Many archæologists have discussed this characteristic effacement of the muscular system in Indian sculpture and painting without arriving at the true explanation. Dr. Leemans, in his great work on Bôrôbudûr, notices as curious that "the very imperfect manner of drawing the muscles" is accompanied with the most complete finish of other details of the statues, such as the ornaments, flowers, and jewels. He adds that the hair, the eyes, nose, mouth, sometimes the teeth and nails of the fingers and toes, are executed nearly always with admirable care and fidelity. But he contents himself with the suggestion that the Hindu horror of pollution prevented Indian artists from dissecting the dead body to obtain a sufficient knowledge of anatomy.

This certainly does not explain why they refrained from any attempt to reproduce the details of the muscular system, when they had far better opportunities of studying artistic anatomy on the living subject than are to be found in colder climates, where the body is usually concealed by clothing.

Moor, in his "Indian Pantheon,"[1] makes the somewhat fantastic suggestion that the baths and frequent anointings in which Indians indulge had the effect of softening the body and effacing the contours, so that the Indian artists were after all really trying to imitate a natural effect. He overlooked the fact that the religious devotee, on whom Indian artists founded their highest ideals, was just the person who indulged least in ablutional or other luxuries, and certainly did not occupy himself with effacing his contours by means of baths and anointings.

Another archæologist, quoted by Leemans, has suggested that the Indian artist was so preoccupied by the great number of symbols of the Hindu cult that he did not permit himself to be raised to the highest levels of his art by an exact knowledge of the anatomy of the human body. It would be much more just to say that the Indian artist, rightly regarding a knowledge of anatomy as not an end in itself, had an intense feeling of the higher aims of art which sometimes led him to try and overleap its limitations—for Indian art has the defects of its qualities.

[1] Page 248.



PADMAPÂNI (?)

(From Tibet)

Even Professor Grünwedel writes as if Indian sculpture must be judged by the rules and formularies of modern European art-academies, and attempts to explain the assumed anatomical ignorance of Indian sculptors by the technical difficulties which the Indian fondness for jewellery imposed upon them. "The shoulders loaded with broad chains, the arms and legs covered with metal rings, the bodies encircled with richly linked girdles, could never have attained an anatomically correct form. Everywhere the carrying out of a clear outline was interfered with by broad ornamental lines, rich and tasteful in themselves, disturbing the natural position of the muscles of the leg and arm, and, in consequence, the limbs have received at the best an effeminate, seemingly correct, finish." [1]

But I venture to think that any one with experience in art-teaching who studies this question will find all these suggestions very wide of the mark. It is impossible to believe that artists, who showed such a beautiful feeling for line and form, and such remarkable executive powers as are evident in the best Indian sculpture, always failed, by some curious lapse of artistic perception, in the very ordinary imitative qualities necessary for a completely accurate modelling of the muscular system of the human body. Indian art, in every other branch, has solved the highest technical difficulties. Why, then, should we assume

[1] "Buddhist Art in India," p. 32.

incompetence in this one respect, for the very inadequate reasons given by archæologists? It is surely much more logical — since we discover Indian artists beginning to produce sculpture of Indian saints in attitudes suggestive of Yoga philosophy just at the time when the Yoga doctrine had established itself as one of the fundamental theories of Hinduism—to conclude that they purposely suppressed the details of the physical body with the intention of suggesting the inner Self, purified and exalted by communion with the Universal Soul.

The principles of Yoga philosophy were not, of course, part of Buddha's teaching, but the root-idea of Yoga—that through meditation, or intense concentration of thought, the body as well as the soul could be purified and freed from their grosser attachments—was recognised by all schools of Indian philosophy at a very early period, and it could never have been excluded from the philosophy of art as taught in the Indian monastic schools. After the first century of the Christian era the Yoga doctrines were fully recognised by Buddhists of the Mahâyâna school, and it was not until about that time that images of Buddha began to be worshipped in India.

The interest which Buddhists took in the Yoga school of philosophy is shown in the records of Hiuen Thsang's pilgrimage to India at the beginning of the seventh century. He had studied various systems of Indian philosophy in China,

PLATE VI



VAJRAPÂNI or DORJE CHANG

but the chief object of his pilgrimage was to obtain more knowledge of the Yoga-sastra. On his journey he met a learned Buddhist priest, Moksha-gupta, who invited him to stay and learn philosophy from him. Hiuen Thsang's first inquiry was: "Have you here the 'Yoga-sastra' or not?"

Moksha-gupta answered: "Why ask about such an heretical work as that? The true disciple of Buddha does not study such a work!"

Hiuen Thsang rejoined: "In our country, too, we have long had the 'Vibhâshâ' and 'Kôsha'; but I have been sorry to observe their logic superficial and their language weak; they do not speak of the highest perfection. On this account I have come so far as this, desiring to be instructed in the 'Yoga-sastra' of the Great Vehicle. And the Yoga, what is it but the revelation of Maitreya, the Bodhisattva next to become Buddha, and to call such a book heretical, how is it you are not afraid of the bottomless pit?"[1]

It is pointedly observed by the Chinese historian that Hiuen Thsang, who was at first filled with reverence for Moksha-gupta's learning, from that time "regarded him as dirt." Though this refers to a comparatively late period in the history of Buddhist art in India, there is plenty of direct evidence that at the time when the Indian monastic schools began to represent the person of Buddha, the whole doctrine of Yoga

[1] Beal's "Life of Hiuen Thsang," p. 39.

was a recognised branch of hieratic learning. But long before that time all sects of Hinduism acknowledged the physical power of concentrated thought, and even Buddhists who might refuse to accept the philosophy of Yoga fully believed that by means of Dhyâna, or meditation, the living body could be etherealised and transported to one of the higher spiritual planes, or heavens. Hiuen Thsang declared that in this way an artist conveyed himself to the Tusitâ heavens to observe the person of Maitreya, the coming Buddha.[1] This points clearly to a mystical conception of Buddha's personality, and not an ordinary naturalistic one.

There is also important corroborative evidence of this in the canons of Buddhist art established by the old Indian monasteries, which may be considered decisive.

Amongst the thirty-two principal *lakshanas*,[2] or marks of divinity attributed to the person of Buddha—such as short, curly hair; long arms, a mark of noble birth; and golden-coloured skin—there is a very significant one: "the upper part of the body [*i.e.* the trunk] is like that of a lion."

Let us try to realise the precise meaning of this symbolism. The most prominent characteristic of the body of the Indian lion—the broad, deep shoulders, and the narrow, contracted abdomen—

[1] Beal's "Life of Hiuen Thsang," p. 66.

[2] For a complete list of the superior and inferior *lakshanas* of Buddha, see Grünwedel's "Buddhist Art in India," p. 161.

PLATE VII



~~A BODHISATTVA~~

(From Nepal)

A Mānuṣi Buddha — Maula ?

are suggested in the spirited drawing of the Persian school reproduced in Plate LIII.

Now Buddha, as we know, attained to his Buddhahood at the close of a prolonged fast; and, according to the canons of European art, he should have been represented in a state of extreme emaciation. The Gandharan sculptors did, indeed, occasionally represent Buddha thus; and, as they made no attempt to idealise, except in the Greek sense, they produced a horribly realistic type, evidently carefully studied from a human being reduced by starvation to a living skeleton. The Lahore Museum possesses one example of this, and the British Museum another.

But the Indian sculptors never descended to such vulgarity. With their finer artistic insight, they would not take the hideousness of starvation as the symbol of their worship; they thought not of the feeble, wasted human body, but only of the spiritual strength and beauty the Master had gained through his enlightenment. They gave him a new, spiritualised body—broad-shouldered, deep-chested, golden-coloured, smooth-skinned, supple and lithe as a young lion.

The leonine characteristics of this transcendental body are expressed with fine and subtle artistic feeling in the Java and Ceylon sculptures (Plates II. and III.) and in the Nepalese statuette (Plate X.). They are more crudely indicated in the Sarnath Buddha (Plate IV.), and exaggerated in the Bodhisattva Vajrapâni (Plate XIII.). These are

the characteristics which distinguish the true Indian ideal of Buddha from the mixed types of Gandhara, and from those of Chinese and Japanese art, which are more closely allied to the Gandharan type than to the Indian, as they were formed by the fusion of Indian idealism with the naturalism of the Confucian and other indigenous schools of China and Japan.

If the peculiarities of Indian religious sculpture and painting were, as archæologists suggest, only such as are found in the art of all early states of civilisation, in the crude attempts of savage races and in the untutored scrawlings of childhood, we should certainly discover in Indian art, as in the art of every Western nation, a steady progression towards a more perfect naturalism in the highest ideals of the human figure, following the general advance in technical skill and artistic culture. But what we actually find is that Indian sculptors who, before they came into contact with the Græco-Roman school of Gandhara, had developed, as we can see in the Bharhut and Sanchi sculptures, no mean skill in a naturalistic treatment of the human body, deliberately went further and further from the naturalistic ideals of Greek art, although they advanced far beyond the technical skill shown in the Gandharan type, which seems to have been their starting-point in evolving their own ideal of the image of Buddha.

And here I must enter an emphatic dissent from the opinion of that distinguished savant,

Professor Grünwedel, who is both artist and archæologist, that "the ideal type of Buddha was created for Buddhist art by foreigners,"[1] *i.e.* by the Gandharan sculptors, although in doing so I am disputing another article of faith subscribed to by nearly all European orientalists. If Professor Grünwedel had confined himself to the simple proposition that the Gandharan sculptors were the first iconographers of the person of Buddha, the statement would undoubtedly coincide with our present knowledge of Indian art-history; but, as Indian sculptors had, long before the earliest Gandharan sculptures, made images of the Hindu deities, it would be very rash to assume that this question is finally settled.

Professor Grünwedel, however, goes much further than this, and elevates the Gandharan type on a pedestal as the model on which all later Buddhist as well as Brahmanical creations in art were based.[2] Here, I venture to think, he is confusing archæology and art, the assimilative power of a living, national art with artistic inspiration.

The Gandharan school is not an example of Hellenistic influence upon Indian art, but the reverse: it shows Græco-Roman art being gradually Indianised. The Gandharan sculptors doubtless helped to execute many Indian monuments, but they never created an ideal of Buddha for Indians to imitate.

[1] "Buddhist Art in India," p. 68.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 147.

During the first three centuries of our era, as Professor Grünwedel himself shows, Greek art was an article of export, and Greek artists, or art-practitioners—a very important distinction—travelled throughout the Roman Empire in search of employment.[1]

The Gandharan sculptors were, therefore, mere craftsmen, and very inferior craftsmen, compared with those of Pompeii and Herculaneum; hirelings following more or less impure Hellenic traditions, and engaged by the kings of Gandhara, on the north-west frontier of India, to work under the orders of the Indian Buddhist monks. Their art, so far as it was Hellenic, was the dying art of Greece degraded into an inferior handicraft. The old Attic fire had burnt itself out, and Indian thought was trying to rekindle the embers with the fervent ardour of a new faith and a new ideal.

But that ideal was never realised in Gandharan art, certainly not in the early examples directly attributable to Græco-Roman influence. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of this period are soulless puppets, debased types of the Greek and Roman pantheon, posing uncomfortably in the attitudes of Indian asceticism. Not even in the best type of Gandhara do we find the spirituality, the worshipfulness, of the true Indian ideal. The taint of commercialism, the insincerity of an art created by Court patronage rather than by strong

[1] Grünwedel and Burgess, "Buddhist Art in India," p. 84.

PLATE VIII



BUDDHA WORSHIPPED BY INDRA

(Gandharan Sculpture from Loriyân Tangai)

national feeling, is over them all. They show a feeble trace of classic elegance, and a suggestion of the polished refinement of Hellenism, which seems, however, strangely incongruous with the simple life of Indian religious devotees. But there is little of that spiritual grace which is only found in the inspired art of ardent worshippers, who only can create the ideal of a living art and of a living faith.

The insincerity and want of spirituality typical of nearly all the art of Gandhara are, as I have said, most conspicuous in the earliest examples, or those which are attributed to the first century of our era, when the Græco-Roman influence was strongest. Two centuries later, in the sculptures of the Loriyân Tangai Monastery,[1] which Professor Grünwedel describes as belonging to the best period of Gandhara, the art has become more Indian, more national, and more spiritual, but it has not yet achieved the true ideal of real Indian art. Since, however, it is Indian influence, Indian thought, which has so far perfected the style, it is surely incorrect to say that the ideal of Indian Buddhist art has been created by foreigners. Foreign hands may have held the tools, but the influences which dominated the art have been throughout Indian.

Professor Grünwedel, Dr. Burgess, and many other orientalists have with profound learning and research catalogued the instances of Gand-

[1] Now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

haran forms and types which abound in later Indian art. But the origin of artistic ideals cannot be determined by the collection of archæological statistics, without correlating them with the intellectual and spiritual impulses which created the art to which they belong. The mere survival of these forms and types does not prove that Indian artists derived any inspiration from Gandhara. Naturalists may point out striking physiological resemblances between man and chimpanzee, but will hardly convince us that all our spiritual development is due to a simian ancestry. The perfected ideal of Indian art is as far in advance of the Gandharan type as the art of the Parthenon surpasses the art of Gandhara. Neither artistically nor technically is it possible to place the best Gandharan sculptures in the same plane with that of Bôrôbudûr, Elephanta, or Ellora, or even with the best modern Nepalese metal-work, such as the Buddha in Plate VI.

For the purpose of comparison, I have reproduced two of the most striking reliefs from Loriyân Tangai, the worshipping of Buddha by Indra (Plate VIII.), and Buddha's first sermon at Benares (Plate IX.). I think it will be evident at a glance how different in conception, and inferior in every artistic quality, is the type of Buddha here given from the true Indian ideal of Divinity, illustrated in the other examples given in this book. There is a certain prettiness about

PLATE IX



BUDDHA PREACHING

(Gandharan Sculpture from Loriyân Tangai)

these reliefs, rather suggestive of *bonbonnières* or cheap, modern Italian plaster-work; but in any large collection of Gandharan sculptures the affected, expressionless poses and mechanical execution become very tiresome, and testify to the absolute insincerity of Gandharan art.

In many ways it is analogous to the hybrid, Anglicised sculpture of modern India, and before we continue it will be instructive to compare the traditional, idealised Yogi type with an attempt by a modern Indian sculptor to represent a modern Indian Yogi. The portrait statuette of Swami Bhaskarânanda Saraswati (Plate I. (*b*)), the Benares Yogi whose photograph is reproduced in the same plate, is very popular with educated Indians. It is typical of modern Indian art influenced by European ideas, and of what passes for European culture among the great majority of Indians. Here there is a deliberate attempt to reproduce the whole anatomical system, but the spirituality, greatness of style, and instinct for beauty of the old ideal art have given place to a feeble imitation of detail and an affectation as shallow and insincere as that which is so conspicuous in the art of Gandhara.

The genuine Indian feeling and the Indian ideal appear again in a very fine statuette cast in copper, from Nepal, of a Bodhisattva, probably Maitreya, the coming Buddha, "the Loving One," preaching. The date of it is difficult to determine: the figure itself may be of the eighth

century, or earlier, but the pedestal and aureole behind are quite modern.

The suggestion can easily be made that the wonderfully fine modelling of this figure, as well as the pose, are indicative of Greek influence. But, however impressed the artist may have been by Grecian models, he has never departed from the Eastern ideal, or made any attempt to create an Indian Hermes or Apollo.

The attitude and the subject suggest comparison with a famous work by a modern French sculptor—Rodin's St. John the Baptist, in the Luxembourg; though the treatment of the great French artist is the very antithesis of the Indian. The St. John, in its nervous, restless energy, interrogative air, strong individuality, and splendidly realistic modelling, sums up all the spirit of Western life and artistic thought. The Bodhisattva, in its quiet, restrained dignity, calm conviction, and effacement of physical detail, is the embodiment of a great national tradition, a synthesis of Eastern philosophy and religious art.

H. Taine's admirable comparison of the national art of Greece with the individualistic art of modern Europe is an appropriate commentary on the spirit of these two representative works. "The modern citizen," says Taine, "is constrained to confine himself to the little province of a specialist. One development excludes the others; he must be a professional man, politician, or savant, a man

PLATE X



MAITREYA PREACHING

(From Nepal)

PLATE XI



MAITREYA PREACHING
From Ceylon)

of business, or a family man—he must shut himself up in one occupation, and cut himself off from the others: he would be insufficient if he were not mutilated. For this reason he has lost his tranquillity, and art is deprived of its harmony. Moreover, the sculptor speaks no more to a religious city, but to a crowd of inquisitive individuals; he ceases to be, for his part, citizen and priest—he is only a man and artist. He insists upon the anatomical detail which will attract the connoisseur, and on the striking expression which will be understood by the ignorant. He is a superior kind of shopkeeper, who wishes to compel public attention and to keep it. He makes a simple work of art, and not a work of national art. The spectator pays him in praise, and he pays the spectator in pleasure." [1]

With this fine Nepalese statuette may be compared another very beautiful one (Plate XI.), found in Ceylon, now in the possession of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, which may be ascribed to the fifth or sixth century A.D. It also seems to represent Maitreya preaching, and was probably an image used in household worship. The reproduction is slightly larger than the original. Though the execution is not carried so far as in some of the other examples, the expressive and truthful movement of the figure is given with consummate skill, not surpassed in any of the much-praised statuettes of Tanagra. There is a very fine collec-

[1] "Voyage en Italie," vol. ii., p. 165.

tion of similar household deities, found in Java, in the Ethnographic Museum, Leyden.

Plate XII. is from a colossal standing figure, unfortunately mutilated, on the terrace of the Ruanweli dagoba at Anuradhapura, Ceylon. Popular tradition describes it as a statue of the King Datha Gâmani (B.C. 161-137) who built the dagoba, but, if this is correct, the statue was certainly of a later date ; not a contemporary portrait, but an idealised, traditional representation of the king as a Buddhist saint, or Arhat.

Plate XIII. shows a very rare and interesting example of ancient Nepalese art, probably of the same period as Plate X. The reclining figure of Vajrapâni, or Visva-pâni, with two *sâktis*, is admirable in its movement: while the pose is strongly suggestive of Greek or Roman influence, the technical treatment of the figure is altogether Indian, and different in intention from anything found in Greek art, except, perhaps in the early period, when Egyptian or Eastern influence predominated in it. The third eye in the forehead, symbolic of spiritual insight, is also given to images of the Hindu deity, Siva.

The pose is identical with that of a stone carving from Hasanpur, Monghyr, of which a photograph exists in the Indian Office collection (No. 169, Bengal), described as Avalokiteshvara though the symbol of the thunderbolt is an attribute of Vajrapâni.

It would be very interesting to decide definitely

the question, assuming that the Gandharan sculptors were the first to represent the person of Buddha, when and where did the Indian ideal originate? When did the Græco-Roman conception of Buddha as a god in human form, like the gods of Greece and Rome, give place to the true Indian conception of divinity in a superhuman, spiritualised body? In a subsequent chapter I shall discuss the evidence bearing on this point in the Buddhist sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amarâvati. The idea of Dhyâna or Yoga as a means of obtaining spiritual power was older even than Buddha, but from the monuments of Asoka we can gather that the person of Buddha did not receive adoration from his disciples until several centuries after his death; certainly the idea was not introduced into Buddhist art until after the original teaching of Buddha had been modified by the doctrines of the Mahayana school, or somewhere about the first century of the Christian era.

It is impossible to fix it to any particular monument of Indian art, or to give it any precise date. It was no rapid and decisive movement, like that of the Renaissance in Europe, the steps of which can be easily followed in the artistic records of the time. The change from the early naturalistic art came very gradually and imperceptibly, following the evolution of the Indian philosophic systems. Probably the Buddhist monastic schools—the universities of ancient India, which comprised schools of painting and

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sculpture—were the first to adopt it as a canon, whether they originated it or not. Though it appears first, as far as we know, in Buddhist art, the idea was Brahmanical rather than Buddhist, and we must not exclude the possibility that it was borrowed from the orthodox Hindu sects, which worshipped anthropomorphic images long before they were introduced in Buddhism.

But whenever and wherever this idea of a purified transcendental body formed by the practice of Dhyâna or Yoga originated, it remained a canon of Buddhist art in India until Buddhism itself merged into later Hinduism. It has been adopted, almost invariably, by Indian sculptors of all sects from that time until now as a type of divinity, and from this starting-point of a divine type it gradually established itself as an academic type of beauty for the human figure also.



PRAJNÂPARAMITÂ

(From Java)

CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINE IDEAL (*continued*)

JUST as the male form in Indian art is taken, not as an exemplar of physical beauty, but as the material manifestation of the Universal Spirit, so the female becomes the concrete expression of the Power of the Spirit—its virtue, or *sâkti*. Instead of an Aphrodite or Pallas Athene, Indian art creates a Saraswati—Divine Wisdom—or Prajnâparamitâ, her Buddhist counterpart, and Târâ, the Spirit of Infinite Mercy.

The beautiful stone figure of Prajnâparamitâ from Java (Plate XIV.), now in the Ethnographic Museum at Leyden, is a wonderful realisation of these exalted ideals, and worthy to rank as one of the most spiritual creations of any art, Eastern or Western.

Seated on a lotus-flower, the symbol of purity and divine birth, in the pose of a *yogini*, Prajnâparamitâ is making with her hands the *mudrâ*, or symbolic sign, of spiritual instruction. Her face has that ineffable expression of heavenly grace which Giovanni Bellini, above all other Italian masters, gave to

his Madonnas. Prajnâparamitâ, as the consort of the Adi-Buddha, was regarded as the Mother of the Universe.

The date of this sculpture is uncertain, though, from the style of the execution, it must be attributed to the later period of Buddhist art in Java. The doctrine of the Adi-Buddha as the Creator is said by Professor Grünwedel to have been first promulgated about the twelfth or thirteenth century, but the conception of Prajnâparamitâ as the Logos, or Divine Wisdom, is much older. Nâgârjuna, who preached the Mahâyâna doctrine of Buddhism about the second century A.D., produced a treatise, called "Prajnâparamitâ," which he declared was first dictated by Buddha himself and committed to the care of the Nâga demi-gods until men attained sufficient wisdom to comprehend his teaching. The goddess here may be regarded as an incarnation of the Divine Word. A book is placed on the lotus-flower, the stalk of which is twined round her left arm.

The charmingly graceful and spiritual Târâ (Plate XV.) of hammered copper, gilt and richly jewelled, is a statuette in the Calcutta Art Gallery of the Nepâli-Tibetan School, and probably by the same hand as the fine figure of Avalokiteshvara already illustrated (Plate V.).

Another beautiful statuette of Târâ, of Nepalese workmanship, is shown in Plate XVI. This is an uncommon form of Târâ, suggestive of the Hindu goddess Durgâ. She has eight arms,

PLATE XV



TÂRÂ
(From Tibet)

and, while one left hand is making the symbolic sign of instruction, the corresponding right one is grasping the *vajra*, the thunderbolt. The original, which is in the Calcutta Art Gallery, is cast in copper, gilt and jewelled. The gilding and the flashes of ruby, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and crystal, give all these Nepalese and Tibetan images a warmth and richness hardly to be realised by those who are accustomed to the academic coldness of modern marble and bronze.

The gracious expression of the face and the movement of the whole figure are full of fine feeling, and the dignity of the sentiment is fully sustained by the exquisite technique. The very difficult position of the feet and lower limbs is treated with consummate skill and knowledge of anatomical structure, showing that the artist was by no means deficient in the science of his art.[1]

The female type is also taken by Indian artists to personify divine fury and destructive energy, in the form of Durgâ, the fighting goddess who wars against demons and spirits of evil, and Kâlî, mother of all the gods and the great destroyer of the universe. The latter, in modern Hindu art, is a hideous, vulgar conception, altogether unworthy of the noble artistic traditions of earlier times.

It was, of course, inevitable that Hinduism, comprising as it does so many diverse states of civilisation and of intellectual development, should

[1] The six supplementary arms are considerably damaged in the original.

embrace many artistic monstrosities, the wild imaginings of primitive races, and the crude vulgarities of the uncultured. But it will never be difficult to distinguish the barbaric elements of an undeveloped state of culture from the higher ideals of Indian æsthetic philosophy.

It need hardly be stated that the Indian process of artistic thought has often produced many degenerate and revolting types, just as the European process has produced a vast amount of inane and intolerable trash. The impartial critic will not base his judgment on these enormities, but recognise them as distortions of the purer ideals on which Indian art is founded.

The early Buddhistic art, as we have seen, though it took for its ideal a spiritual rather than a physical type, was so far in sympathy with the Greek that in the representation of the Divinity it never attempted physiological impossibilities. The Buddha was always remembered as the Yogi, a human form, and a type familiar to every Indian, only of a purer, finer substance than ordinary flesh and blood.

But the orthodox Hindu teaching had always maintained that it was irreverent and illogical to found artistic ideals of the Divine upon any strictly human or natural prototype. "The a rtist," says Sukracharya, "should attain to the

[1] Sukracharya is the reputed author of an ancient Sanskrit work, "Sukranitisara" or "The Elements of Polity by Sukracharya." The fourth chapter, besides discoursing on politics, law, reformatory institutions, and

PLATE XVI



TÂRÂ (?)

(From Nepal)

Vajrapāni
or Vajrasattva

images of the gods by means of spiritual contemplation only. The spiritual vision is the best and truest standard for him. He should depend upon it, and not at all upon the visible objects perceived by external senses. It is always commendable for the artist to draw the images of the gods. To make human figures is bad, and even irreligious. It is far better to present the figure of a god, though it is not beautiful, than to reproduce a remarkably handsome human figure."

"Spiritual contemplation." Here is the keynote of Hindu art, as it was that of the art of Fra Angelico and of other great Christian masters. The whole philosophy of Indian art is in these two words, and they explain a great deal that often seems incomprehensible and even offensive to Europeans.

While the Greeks made the perfect human body the highest ideal for an artist, there has been always in Indian thought a deep-rooted objection to anthropomorphic representations of the Divine. The Aryans in the early Vedic times built no temples, and image-worship had no place in their ritual. The Hindu *Sastras* hold that it is unlucky to have any representation of a human figure within the precincts of a temple. The substitution of a plain stone emblem for a statue as the principal object of worship for most of the

the punishment of criminals, deals with arts and sciences, the building of castles, temples, bridges, and ships, the making and repairing of images, gardening and the digging of wells, etc. It was translated into Tibetan in the seventh century.

followers of Siva in the present day is probably an instance of this feeling, and may date from the time of the great Hindu reformer of the eighth century, Sankaracharya.[1]

In a famous Hindu temple of Southern India the Cause of all things is represented by space—an empty cell—showing a fine perception of the limitations of art; for how can art, which is know-

[1] The so-called phallic symbol of Siva, though it is found in the Saivaite temples of Java, does not appear to have been the principal object of adoration there, as it is now at Benares, the great centre of Saivaite worship in India. It is evident, from the number of statues of Siva found in Java, that the worship of his image in human, or superhuman, form was also usual in Northern India, the birthplace of Saivaism, before the time of Sankara, as it is still in the south. At the time of Hiuen Thsang's visit, the principal object of worship at Benares was a statue of Siva, a hundred feet high, "grave and majestic, filling the spectator with awe, and seeming as it were indeed alive." If the disuse of anthropomorphic images were only a consequence of the Muhammadan conquest it would have applied to all Hindu sects alike.

Though the subject is too intricate to be discussed at length here, it may be stated that there are good grounds for believing that the present Saivaite emblem, when it took the place of anthropomorphic images, had no connection whatever with phallic worship. The latter idea seems to have been a reversion to the primitive phallic worship, which was common to the whole ancient world, one of the many corruptions which have crept into modern popular Hinduism and tacitly accepted by the more ignorant of the Brahmin priesthood. In Sankara's teaching, it was only taken as a symbol of the Eternal Unity, or of "the formless god." It had probably been gradually evolved from the miniature *stupa*, or reliquary, which was the popular emblem of later Buddhist worship. There are many close similarities between Saivaism and the Buddhism which it supplanted, or absorbed, and the symbols of these two sects are often difficult to distinguish from each other. Even now it is certain that the phallic associations are only vulgar and incidental, not the only signification attached to the symbol by the uneducated Hindu worshipper.

ledge and expression, represent the Unknowable and Inexpressible?

The Mosaic law declares, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or likeness of anything that is in heaven or earth," and the Sunna, the law of Islam, likewise expressly forbids the representation of animate nature in art.

The Buddhist creed originally was simply a rule of life founded on the precepts of right views, right resolves, right speech, right actions and living, right effort, right self-knowledge, and right meditation. Its ritual at first was purely symbolical and non-idolatrous, though Buddha's followers in after-times adopted the image of the Master, or rather that of his spiritualised Self, as an object of worship. For several centuries this spiritualised human type in many variations remained the characteristic of Buddhist art, but when the orthodox Brahmanical influence began gradually to assert itself more and more strongly in Buddhism we find Indian artists attempting to differentiate the spiritual type from the human by endowing the former with superhuman attributes, quite regardless of physiological probabilities or possibilities. Indian art has never produced a Phidias or Praxiteles, not because an Olympian Zeus, or an Aphrodite of Cnidus was beyond its intellectual grasp, but because it deliberately chose an imaginative rather than a naturalistic ideal.

The old Hebraic tradition, like the Hellenic,

declared that God made man in His own image; but the Hindu conception of the Cause of all things was of something much more vast and unapproachable—a vision too tremendous for human eyes to see. In one of the most striking passages of the "Bhagavad-Gitâ," Krishna reveals to Arjuna the nature of his Divinity. It has been finely rendered into English by Sister Nivedita thus[1]:

"I am the Soul, O Arjuna, seated in the heart of every being. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. Vishnu among the gods am I, among the lights I am the Sun. I am the mind among the senses, the moon among the stars. Amongst the waters, I am Ocean himself. Amongst trees, the Aswattha (Bo-tree) tree am I; amongst weapons, the thunderbolt; and Time amongst events. Of rivers I am the Ganges. Of created things I am the beginning, middle, and end. Time eternal am I, and the Ordainer, with face turned on every side! Death that seizeth all, and the source of all that is to be. I am the splendour of those that are splendid. I am Victory, I am Exertion, I am the Goodness of the good. I am the Rod of those that chastise, and the Policy of them who seek victory. I am the Silence amongst things that are secret, and the Knowledge of those possessed of knowledge. That which is the seed of all things, I am that! Supporting this entire Universe with a portion only of My strength, I stand!"

[1] "Cradle-tales of Hinduism," p. 215.

PLATE XVII





DHARMAPÂLA
(From Java)

Arjuna begged of his divine charioteer to show him his Eternal Self, his Universal Form; but Krishna replied: "Thou art not able to look upon Me with this eye of thine. I give thee an eye divine. See now My sovereign, mystic nature!"

Then, when Arjuna looked, he saw a resplendent vision filling all the space between earth and heaven, glowing as a mass of light in every region, bright as the sun and vast beyond all conception. It was Something with innumerable arms, and faces turned everywhere, uniting in Its body all the gods, all men, and all created things. Even with the supernatural power bestowed upon him Arjuna was appalled by this wondrous transfiguration, and begged of Krishna to resume his milder "four-armed form." He received then the solemn warning:

> By favour, through My mystic form divine
> Arjuna, thou My form supreme hast seen,
> Resplendent, Universal, Infinite,
> Primeval, seen before by none but thee.
> Yet not by Vedas, nor by sacrifice,
> By study, alms, good works, or rites austere
> Can this My form be seen by mortal man,
> O Prince of Kurus! but by thee alone.[1]

Hindu philosophy thus clearly recognises the impossibility of human art realising the form of God. It therefore creates in Indian sculpture and painting an allegorical representation of those

[1] "Bhagavad-Gitâ," p. 127, translated by John Davies, Trübner's Oriental Series.

milder, humanised, but still superhuman, divine appearances which mortal eyes can bear to look upon. A figure with three heads and four, six, or eight arms seems to a European a barbaric conception, though it is not less physiologically impossible than the wings growing from the human scapula in the European representation of angels—an idea probably borrowed from the East. But it is altogether foolish to condemn such artistic allegories *a priori*, because they do not conform to the canons of the classic art of Europe. All art is suggestion and convention, and if Indian artists, by their conventions, can suggest divine attributes to Indian people with Indian culture, they have fulfilled the purpose of their art. It is the unfortunate tendency of modern European education to reduce art to mere rules of logic or technique, anatomy or perspective, style or fashion, so that the creative faculty, on which the vitality of art depends, is drowned in empty formularies of no intellectual, moral, or æsthetic value.

There are often intense imaginative power and artistic skill in these Indian conceptions, as any one who attempts to study them without prejudice may learn to appreciate. What tremendous energy and divine fury are concentrated in the bronze statuette of Dharmapala (Plate XVII.), a manifestation of the Supreme Buddha as Defender of the Faith, trampling underfoot the enemies of religion! And what a suggestion of majesty and restrained power there is in the Manjusri (Plate XVIII.),

PLATE XVIII



MANJUSRI

(From Nepal)

the Bodhisattva representing creative science,[1] dispelling ignorance with his uplifted sword of knowledge! This is from a gilt copper statuette in the Calcutta Art Gallery, which is interesting as an historical landmark, for the inscription on it in Nepalese shows that it was made to commemorate the death of a learned *pandit* and dedicated to a Nepalese shrine in the year A.D. 1782.[2] It has all the fine sentiment and decorative skill of the older work, although the technique, more especially in the modelling of the lower limbs, is perfunctory, and cannot compare with some of the earlier examples already illustrated.

A much finer example of technique, belonging to the older Nepalese school, is the three-headed and six-armed divinity shown in Plate XIX. It probably represents the Buddhist Triad—Manjusri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapâni, corresponding to the Hindu Triad—Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Siva. The modelling and movement of this statuette are superb.

Hindu sculpture has produced a masterpiece in the great stone alto-relievo of Durgâ slaying the demon Mahisha, found at Singasari, in Java, and

[1] "Manjusri is the Buddhist analogue of the Hindu Brahmâ, or Visvakarma. He is the great architect who constructs the mansions of the world by the supreme Adi-Buddha's command, as Padmapāni by his command creates all animate beings."—B. Hodgson, "Languages, Literature, and Religions of Nepal," p. 43.

[2] The full inscription, translated, is as follows: "Blessing! Hail, Khagamaju! On the occasion of the death of Buddhacharya Ratna Traya this image of Manjusri was made in the Samvat year 902, month Kartika, 10th day of the waning moon. Bliss!"

now in the Ethnographic Museum, Leyden. It belongs to the period of Brahmanical ascendancy in Java which lasted from about A.D. 950 to 1500. The goddess is striding over the prostrate carcass of the buffalo, in which disguise Mahisha had concealed himself, and, seizing the real dwarf-like form of the demon, she is preparing to deal him his death-blow. Judged by any standard it is a wonderful work of art, grandly composed, splendidly thorough in technique, expressing with extraordinary power and concentrated passion the wrath and might of the Supreme Beneficence roused to warfare with the Spirit of Evil.

The student will find in this phase of Indian imaginative art an intensity of feeling—a wonderful suggestion of elemental passion transcending all the feeble emotions of humanity—a revelation of powers of the Unseen which nothing in European art has ever approached, unless it be in the creations of Michelangelo or in the music of Wagner. But such qualities cannot be adequately realised in these isolated sculptures collected in museums and art-galleries; to be fully appreciated they must be seen in their proper environment, and in the atmosphere of the thought which created them.

In the cave-temples of Elephanta, Ellora, and Ajanta Indian sculptors played with chiaroscuro in great masses of living rock with the same feeling as the Gothic cathedral builders, or as

PLATE XIX



THE TRIMÛRTI

(From Nepal)



DURGÂ SLAYING MAHISHA

(From Java)

Wagner played with tonal effects, hewing out on a colossal scale the grander contrasts of light and shade to give a fitting atmosphere of mystery and awe to the paintings and sculptures which told the endless legends of Buddha or the fantastic myths of the Hindu Valhalla.

Though they cannot reproduce this atmosphere, the four following plates (XXI. to XXIV.) will give some idea of the imaginative power and artistic skill of Indian sculptors in dealing with compositions of great dimensions. They are examples of the finest period of Hindu sculpture, from about the sixth to the eighth century, when orthodox Hinduism in India had triumphed over Buddhism, and before Hindustan had succumbed to the Muhammadan invader. The art-traditions, however, were a direct inheritance from later Buddhism.

Plate XXI. is a splendid fragment from the Elephanta caves of a colossal sculpture of Siva as the Destroyer. It was mutilated by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, but enough remains to show the noble composition and movement, and the exquisitely finished modelling of the head, shoulders, and trunk. The latter retains the idealised Buddhist character in the slim waist and effacement of the muscular details.

Plate XXII. is from the wonderful monolithic temple of Kailâsa at Ellora, one of the great masterpieces of Hindu art. It illustrates one of the weird legends of the strife between Ravana,

the ten-headed demon-king of Ceylon, and Râma, the hero of the "Râmâyana."

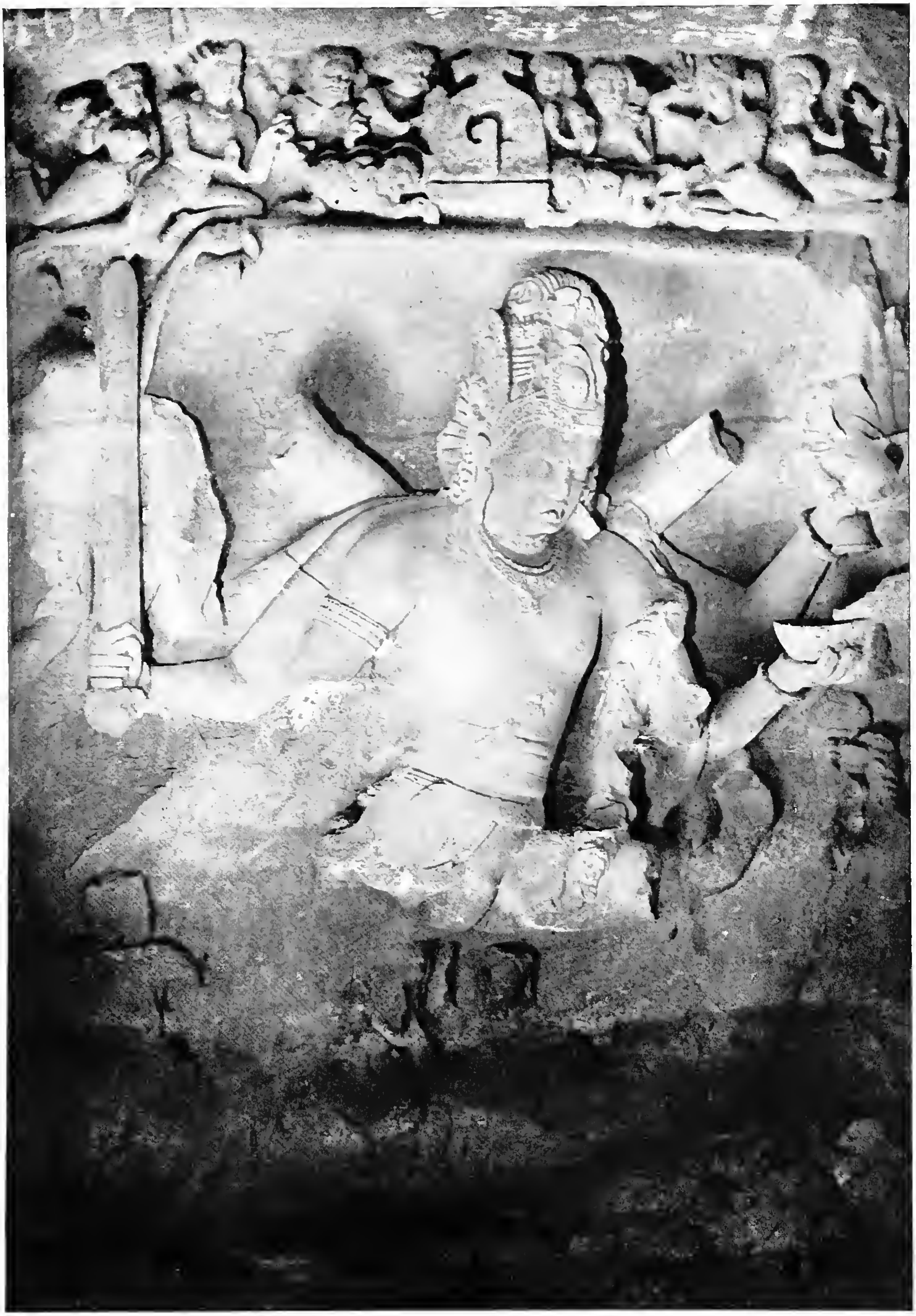
Ravana, finding himself worsted in the war with Râma, flies in his magic car to Kailâsa, Siva's Himalayan paradise, and, placing himself beneath the mountain, begins to strive with all his demon's strength to lift it up, hoping to carry off Siva and the whole Hindu Olympus, and thus masterfully compel the great god's aid against his mortal foe.

Ravana is shown in a cavern beneath Kailâsa, exerting terrific force in his effort to raise it up. The mountain quakes, and Parvati, Siva's wife, startled by the shock, clutches her husband's arm and cries out, "Some one is moving the mountain; we shall be overthrown!" Her maid is flying in alarm, but Siva, only raising one foot, presses down Kailâsa upon Ravana's head, and holds him fast.

The rest of the legend says that the wicked demon-king remained a prisoner for ten thousand years, until his grandfather, Pulastya, son of Brahmâ, teaches him to propitiate Siva, and obtain pardon for his crimes by performing penances, and becoming a devotee of the god.

The story is told with intense dramatic force and imagination in this great sculpture. The whole execution shows an extraordinary command of glyptic technique, not only in the grouping and composition of line, but in the powerful and subtle treatment of the varied gradations of relief.

With the feeling of a Rembrandt for effects of



SIVA AS BHAIRAVA
(From Elephanta)

chiaroscuro, the sculptor has concentrated masses of deep shadow and strong broken light upon the crouching, struggling figure of Ravana, which throws into high relief all the horror of his demoniacal power.

On the mountain-top where Siva sits enthroned, the serenity of his paradise—hardly disturbed by Parvati's sudden movement and the alarm of her handmaid—is finely suggested in quieter alternations and graduations of relief, softened by a veil of half-shade which falls over them from above.

The license which the Indian artist allows himself, more especially in mythological scenes, of varying the proportions belonging to the same group has been used here with great judgment and discretion. The two principal figures in high relief, the attendant deities on the right and left, and the crowds of lesser divinities and celestial beings, all play admirably their respective parts in the whole scheme. And the astonishing freedom with which this great sculpture is carved from the solid rock, without any of the mechanical aids of the modern sculptor, makes it a splendid *tour de force*, quite apart from its higher artistic qualities.

Plate XXIII. is a variation of the same subject from the Elephanta caves, even now a very dignified and impressive composition, in spite of the shocking mutilation it has suffered.

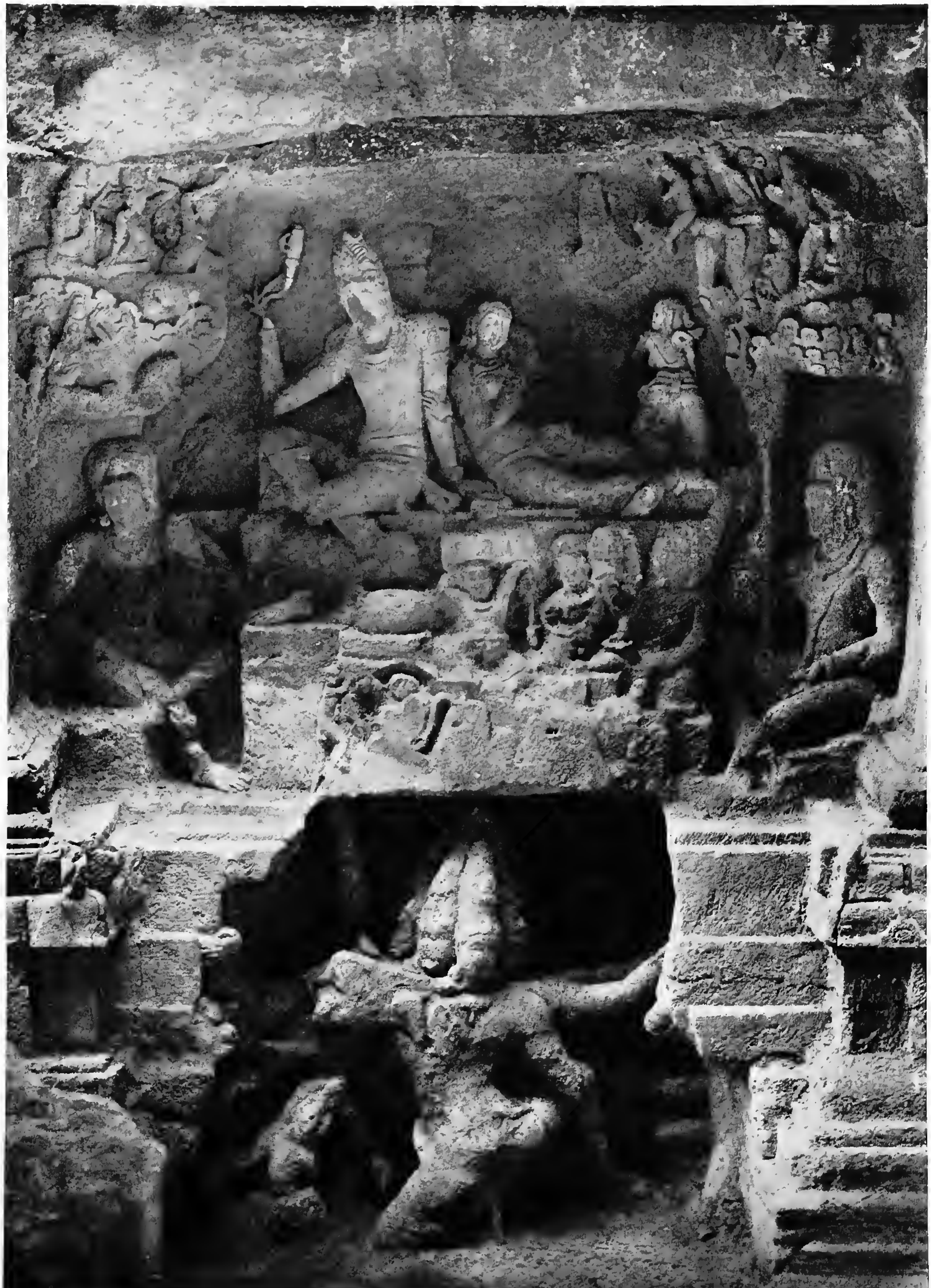
Both at Ellora and Elephanta, as well as at Ajanta and other places, the sculptures, like the Greek statuettes of Tanagra, were finished with a

thin coating of the finest lime-plaster, generally as a preparation for colour and gilding—a process analogous to the *ganosis*, or waxing, upon which Greek sculptors placed so high a value. This finishing has often perished by age, by ill-treatment, or exposure, but sometimes it has been deliberately removed by amateur archæologists in their over-zeal for restoration. The process is still used by Indian sculptors and architects.

Plate XXIV. is a fine fragment from the Das Avatâra cave at Ellora, the temple of the followers of Vishnu, whose cult is the principal modern rival to that of Siva. Artistically the Vaishnavites may be said to be the inheritors of the old Buddhist traditions in India, for the principal icon of the Saivaites is now reduced to a simple emblem, the *lingam*.

This sculpture represents a myth connected with Vishnu's appearance on earth as the man-lion, one of his ten incarnations.

The story is told in the "Vishnu-purana." Hiranya-Kasipu, King of the Asuras and one of the door-keepers of Vishnu's paradise, had obtained from Brahmâ by severe penance the boon that he should not be slain by any created being. Inflated with pride, he then attempted to usurp the sovereignty of Vishnu, and ordered his son, Prahlâda, to offer him the worship due to the god. Prahlâda refused, and braved all the wrath of his infuriated father. When Hiranya struck him he only thought on Vishnu, and the



RAVANA UNDER KAILÂSA

(From Ellora)

blows fell harmless. He was cast into the fire, but was not burnt. With thoughts fixed steadfastly on the Preserver, he remained uninjured when elephants tried to trample him to death, and, when thrown fettered into the sea, a fish, at Vishnu's command, carried him safely ashore.

At last, as Prahlâda continued always praying to Vishnu and proclaiming that he was everywhere and in everything, Hiranya tauntingly asked, "If so, why dost thou not show him to me?"

Upon this Prahlâda arose and struck a column in the hall in which they stood, and behold, Vishnu issued forth from it in a form which was half man and half lion, and tore the impious Asura king to pieces.

The sculptor has chosen the moment when the terrific apparition of the Man-lion rushes forth to seize Hiranya, who, taken unawares and with the mocking taunt still on his lips, makes a desperate effort to defend himself.

Any artist will appreciate the technical strength and the imaginative power with which the subjects are treated in these sculptures. It would, however, be impossible to give an adequate impression of the great sculptured monuments of India within the compass of a single volume, even if the material were available. But artistic research in India is still in its infancy, and the value of the artistic side of oriental scholarship has not yet received any recognition. And even if the opportunities for artists were better than they are, there

are some qualities in art which are impossible to be explained.

No books or illustrations can give the haunting mystery of the Gothic cathedrals, or tell the subtle influence of the interior of St. Mark's at Venice. That only can be realised by seeing them with a mind and disposition for appreciation. Ruskin has truly said: "The arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created." I can only hope, in the illustrations I have selected, to explain the motives and ideals, and to analyse the principles on which the master-works of Indian fine art were based, leaving the rest to those who have the disposition and the opportunities for learning.

Apart from the wanton destruction by bigots and Philistines, and the destructive influences of a tropical climate, there is a special reason why masterpieces of fine art seem to be rare in India compared with their number in Europe. This must always seem to be the case in an art which is entirely creative and imaginative, instead of naturalistic. For, while imagination is the supremest virtue of the artist, it is also the most rare. Works of the highest imaginative power have not been more rare in Indian art than they are in any other country; but when a European fails in this highest poetic gift he finds a safe refuge in painstaking naturalism, which, to nine-



RAVANA UNDER KAILÂSA

(From Elephanta)

tenths of the public, appeals more than imagination. The Indian artist is usually left without this resource of mediocrity, for the traditions of his art do not admit naturalism to be the highest aim, or even one of the principal aims—at least, not in religious art. When he would play to the gallery he must fall back on extravagance and eccentricity, which excite the ridicule of the ignorant European art critic. But more often he relies on his wonderful decorative instinct, and Indian art is always superbly decorative, even when it is wanting in the highest poetic qualities. It is only under European influence that he has fallen into the snare of commercialism, the last and worst vice of decadent intellectual powers.

Art will always be *caviare* to the vulgar, but those who would really learn and understand it should begin with Indian art, for true Indian art is pure art, stripped of the superfluities and vulgarities which delight the uneducated eye. Yet Indian art, being more subtle and recondite than the classic art of Europe, requires a higher degree of artistic understanding, and it rarely appeals to European *dilettanti*, who, with a smattering of perspective, anatomy, and rules of proportion, added to their classical scholarship, aspire to be art-critics, amateur painters, sculptors, or architects; and these, unfortunately, have the principal voice in art-administration in India.

One of the finest extant works of Hindu sculp-

ture is the magnificent bronze figure of Siva, as Natêsa, "The Dancer," which is now in the Madras Museum (Plate XXV.). It is remarkable, not only for extraordinary technical and decorative skill, but for the consummate art with which the abstract ideas of Hindu philosophy are materialised. Siva, the third person of the Hindu Triad, in his material aspect, personifies the powers of destruction and of reproduction—Death and Life; but in his spiritual aspect he represents the Joy of Creation, and the Bliss of Nirvana. To make this last idea intelligible, he is represented in Hindu art as dancing in divine ecstasy upon a prostrate Asura, or spirit of evil. He has four arms, a superhuman attribute treated in this bronze with a wonderful decorative sense and artistic feeling. The first right hand in front is raised in the act of blessing; the corresponding left hand is bent downwards to dispel fear, or to prevent the intrusion of evil spirits. With the second right hand he is shaking a small hour-glass-shaped drum, to the accompaniment of which he is dancing; the corresponding left one holds the sacrificial fire which leads to salvation.

The aureole, or glory of fire, which surrounds the whole figure, may be the same sacrificial fire, or may represent the elemental energy of heat, which was, according to Vedic philosophy, the first manifestation of the creative power of the Supreme Spirit:

PLATE XXIV



NARASINHA AND HIRANYA-KASIPU

(From Ellora)

> There was neither Existence nor Non-Existence,
> The kingdom of air, nor the sky beyond.
> What was there to contain, to cover in—
> Was it but vast unfathomed depths of water?
>
> There was no Death there, nor Immortality,
> No sun was there, dividing day from night.
> Then was there only THAT, resting within Itself.
> Apart from IT there was not anything.
>
> At first within the Darkness, veiled in darkness,
> Chaos unknowable the All lay hid,
> Till straightway from the formless void, made manifest
> By the great power of heat, was born that germ.
>
> *Rig-Veda*, x. 129, Hymn of Creation.

Behind the tiara of the god, his matted locks, parted in the frenzy of the dance, make a fantastic halo, suggesting in its wavy lines the sacred rivers which flowed over Siva's head in his Himalayan paradise.

A cobra, used as an ornament by Siva, symbolic of his destructive power and of the doctrine of reincarnation—the serpent sheds its skin and reappears with apparently a new body, just as the human being slips off this mortal coil, and is, according to the Hindu doctrine, reincarnated—twines round one of the right arms; another, from the left arm, has slipped off and is grasped by the prostrate Asura.

The popular explanation of Siva's dance—for every Hindu allegory has its popular version, adapted to the comprehension of the vulgar—is as follows: Siva, to amuse Parvati, his wife, invented

this frantic dance, and taught it to Tandu, one of his followers: hence it is called the "Tandavan." This Siva performed before the goddess and her sons, to the musical accompaniments of the tabor, struck by his favourite, Nandi. The peacock, the vehicle of Karttikeya (Siva's son and the god of war) mistaking the deep note of the drum for the rolling of thunder, which heralds the approach of rain, screamed with delight. The snake which Siva wears as an ornament, alarmed at the cry of its mortal foe, deserted its place to make for a safe retreat.[1]

It is wonderful how the movement of this bronze, in all its seeming *naïveté*, embodies the mystic idea of divine ecstasy. There is nothing of the mere animal gaiety of the Dancing Faun, nor any suggestion of the drunken frenzy of the Bacchanal. In its technical treatment the figure presents the same broad anatomical generalisation and the peculiar type of torso as we have seen in Buddhist sculpture. No one who observes the mastery of the structure of the human figure and the immense technical skill which the Hindu sculptor here shows, can believe that it was from want of ability or knowledge that he has left out all indication of the smaller details of the muscular system. The Indian artist, as a rule, delights in elaborating detail; but here, as in all his ideals of Deity incarnate, he has deliberately suppressed it.

The date of this splendid work is unknown, but

[1] Burgess, "Elephanta," p. 20.

PLATE XXV



SIVA AS NATESA

(From Madras)

it undoubtedly belongs to the period when Buddhist art-traditions were still predominant in India, even though Buddhism itself had become so much Brahmanised that the difference between the Buddhist and the Hindu pantheon was hardly more than a difference of nomenclature.

The Adi-Buddha of later Buddhism, from whom the Dhyâni-Buddhas and the rest of the Buddhist theogony were said to proceed, appears in orthodox Hinduism as Ishvara, the first manifestation of the Divine Consciousness preceding the creation of the universe. The Buddhist Trimûrti, or Triad—Manjusri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapâni—correspond to the later Hindu Triad of deities—Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Siva, and similarly it is possible to find a Hindu analogue for almost every one of the Buddhist pantheon. In fact, the great strength of Hinduism has always been in its capacity for appropriating and assimilating the ideas of every religious system which comes into contact with it.

As long as Buddhism existed as a distinct sect of Hinduism, and before it was merged into the two great modern Hindu sects of Siva and Vishnu, there was no essential difference between the characteristics of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture and painting, except the difference of symbolism and of nomenclature. This can be clearly seen at Ellora and Elephanta.

At Prambanam, in Java, also, in the temple of Chandi Siva, the sculptures of Hindu gods and

demi-gods have exactly the same general characteristics as the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at Bôrôbudûr, or those of India.

While, therefore, it is impossible to classify Buddhist and Hindu art into distinct schools only by reason of dogmatic differences, Buddhism was, in the essence of its teaching, more favourable to the development of the fine arts than orthodox Hinduism, and was always much more prolific in art-creation, for Buddhism was a protest against the tendency of the Brahmanical teaching of its day to draw all men away from the realities of life and of nature into the metaphysical atmosphere of spiritualistic speculation.

Buddha's own teaching was animated by an intense love of humanity and of nature, though it did not disregard the spiritual life. Thus when Buddhism, like other creeds, fell from the high ideals of its founder and lapsed into superstitious idolatry, it was an idolatry in which human, or semi-human, forms predominated. Orthodox Hinduism, on the other hand, holding aloof from all things of this world, was inclined towards pure symbolism in its ritual, leaving idolatry to the ignorant masses who were incapable of grasping the abstract ideas of its high philosophy.

So, when the influence of Buddhism waned, we find Hindu sculpture reverting to conventional and symbolic types such as that shown in Plate XXVI., recalling the ancient traditions of Baby-



HARI-HARA

(From Java)

lonian, Assyrian, and Egyptian art. It represents Hari-hara, or Siva and Vishnu combined in one person. The original, found in the Kedu district of Java, is now in the museum at Batavia. Its date is *circa* A.D. 1250.

Hindu artists have always been past-masters in the art of the grotesque, and in the quaint conception of Ganesha, the son of Siva, god of worldly wisdom, patron of merchants and schoolboys, and guardian of households, they have full scope for their fantastic imagination. The sculpture from Java (Plate XXVII.) now in the Ethnographic Museum at Leyden, is a masterpiece of its kind, supremely delightful in the powerful and finished modelling of the squat, obese figure possessed of an elephant's head and a Falstaffian human body. The head and trunk and the podgy hands and feet, especially, are perfect in their technique. The row of skulls at Ganesha's feet is a reminder of his descent from the Great Destroyer, Siva.

The types I have now given, illustrative of the principal ideals of Indian religious art, do not give any clear indication of the separate schools of sculpture which have undoubtedly existed in India, although it is commonly supposed by Europeans that the ritualistic and traditional character of Indian art imposed limitations upon it fatal to individual creative efforts.

When Indian religious art was in its full vigour, these limitations probably had no more

restrictive effect on artistic individuality than those which regulated the pre-Renaissance art of Europe. As in every great art-epoch, certain traditional types were established, founded partly on sacerdotal prescription and partly on models created by the recognised masters of different schools. It will not, however, be possible to attempt a satisfactory classification of these schools until artistic research in India has progressed much further than it has at present.

The most circumstantial information regarding the Indian schools of fine art, previous to the Mogul times, is that given by Târanâth, a Tibetan Lama, who wrote a history of Buddhism in A.D. 1608. The last chapter, relating to sculpture and painting, has been translated by Mr. W. T. Heeley, C.S., in the "Indian Antiquary," vol. iv., p. 101. It gives many important landmarks in Indian art-history.

"In former days," he writes, "human masters who were endowed with miraculous powers produced astonishing works of art. It is expressly stated in the 'Vinaya-agama' and other works that the wall-paintings, etc., of those masters were such as to deceive by the likeness to the actual things depicted. For some centuries after the departure of the Teacher, many such masters flourished. After they had ceased to flourish, many masters appeared who were gods in human form: these erected the eight wonderful chaityas of Magadha—the Mahâbodhi, Manjusri-dundhubh-îshvara, etc. [the relic-shrines marking the

PLATE XXVII



GANESHA

(From Java)

chief sacred places of Buddhism] and many other objects."

This refers to a period of which no known artistic traces exist. There are other references to picture-halls and sculptured images in the Mahâbhârata, the Râmâyana, and in the early Buddhist records, but Indian architecture at that time was almost entirely wooden ; the pictures, which were fresco-paintings on a foundation probably of wood or of unbaked clay, have entirely disappeared, together with the buildings. Târanâth only briefly refers to the important monuments of the great Buddhist Emperor Asoka, about 250 B.C., some of which, such as those at Bharhut and Sanchi, still exist.

"In the time of King Asoka, Yaksha artisans [a race of demi-gods or supernatural beings] erected the chaityas of the eight great places, the inner enclosure of the Vajrâsana, etc."

The Vajrâsana, "the diamond-throne," or the place under the bodhi-tree at Gayâ where Buddha obtained enlightenment, was enclosed by a sculptured stone railing by Asoka. Part of this still exists.

"In the time of Nâgârjuna," continues Târanâth, bringing us down to *circa* A.D. 150, "many works were performed by Nâga artisans. Thus the works of the Yakshas and Nâgas for many years deceived by their reality. When, in process of time, all this ceased to be, it seemed as if the knowledge of art had vanished from among

men." The principal works of this epoch now existing are the early paintings of the Ajanta caves, the sculptured rail of Amarâvati, and some of the Gandhara sculptures.

"Then," says our historian, "for a long course of years appeared many artistic efforts, brought to light by the striving of individual genius, but no fixed school or succession of artists." After this rather vague and legendary account the Lama gives us some more precise details:

"Later, in the time of Buddhapaksha [the identity of this monarch is uncertain] the sculpture and painting of the artist Bimbasâra were especially wonderful, and resembled those early works of the gods. The number of his followers was exceedingly great, and, as he was born in Magadha, the artists of his school were called Madhyadesha artists. In the time of King Shîla there lived an especially skilful delineator of the gods born in Marwâr, named Shringadhara: he left behind him paintings and other masterpieces like those produced by the Yakshas. Those who followed his lead were called the Old Western school."

The King Shîla referred to is probably the celebrated King Harsha-Vardhana Siladitya (A.D. 606-648), an account of whose empire is given in the narrative of Hiuen Thsang's pilgrimage. The finest of the paintings and sculptures of Ajanta may thus be attributed to this "Old Western" school.

"In the time of kings Devapâla and Shrîmant Sharmapâla there lived in Varendra (Northern Bengal) an exceedingly skilful artist named Dhîmân, whose son was Bitpâlo; both of these produced many works in cast-metal, as well as sculptures and paintings which resembled the works of the Nâgas. The father and son gave rise to distinct schools; as the son lived in Bengal, the cast images of the gods produced by their followers were usually called gods of the Eastern style, whatever might be the birthplace of their actual designers. In painting the followers of the father were called the Eastern school; those of the son, as they were most numerous in Magadha, were called followers of the Madhyadesha school of painting. So in Nepal the earlier schools of art resembled the Old Western school; but in the course of time a peculiar Nepalese school was formed which in painting and casting resembled rather the Eastern types; the latest artists have no special character."

The King Devapâla was the third of the Pâla dynasty of Bengal, and reigned about the middle of the ninth century.[1] Further research among the sculptures scattered about Behar and Orissa might lead to the identification of Dhîmân's and Bitpâlo's work. It is interesting to find that there was a school of painting and metal work in Nepal founded on the work of these masters, for the examples of old Nepalese art in the Calcutta Art Gallery (Plates X., XIII., XVI.), may give an

[1] "Chronology of India," by C. Mabel Duff, p. 298.

indication of their style. The beautiful Târâ in cast copper shown in Plate XVI. is exactly similar in style to a marble sculpture with an inscription attributed to the eleventh century, found at Uren, a famous Buddhist shrine and hermitage in the old Magadha country, rediscovered by Dr. Waddell.[1] It is now in the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin.

Târanâth proceeds to give some information regarding the Kashmir school:

"In Kashmir, too, there were in former times followers of the Old Western school of Madhya-desha; later on a certain Hasurâya founded a new school of painting and sculpture, which is called the Kashmir school."

The style of the Kashmir school may be seen in the sculptured rail at Amarâvati and in the splendid reliefs of the temple of Angkor-Vat, in Kambodia, casts of which are in the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin.

This interesting sketch of Indian art-history concludes with some remarks on the comparative influence of Buddhism, Muhammadanism, and orthodox Hinduism on art-development:

"Wherever Buddhism prevailed skilful religious artists were found, while wherever the Mlechchas [Muhammadans] ruled they disappeared. Where, again, the Tirthya doctrines [orthodox Hinduism] prevailed, unskilful artists came to the front. Although in Pakam [Burma] and the southern countries the making of images is still going on,

[1] See "Journal Asiatic Society, Bengal," vol. lxi., part 1; No. 1, 1892.

no specimens of their works appear to have reached Tibet. In the south three artists have had many followers: Jaya, Parojaya, and Vijaya."

Târanâth's allusion to the inferiority of the Hindu artists points to some of the esoteric influences in later Hinduism which have contributed to the neglect and contempt into which Indian fine art, especially sculpture, has now fallen. I have before suggested the probability that Sankaracharya, the great Hindu reformer and the apostle of the Vedanta, who lived in the eighth century, was, if not an iconoclast, like the followers of Islam, as much opposed in principle to image-worship as the early Vedic philosophers, though tolerating it as a spiritual help for the ignorant masses.

Obviously the Vedantic doctrine of Mâyâ, which treats all Nature as illusion, might, if pushed to extremes, cut away the ground of all artistic creation, just as the intense mental concentration which is the foundation of the Yoga school of philosophy might eventually lead to absolute quietism and intellectual sterility. And doubtless these two tendencies have had considerable influence on the decadence of fine art in India.

In the days of Hindu political supremacy the manifold activities of a self-supporting and vigorous national life would tend to stimulate the creative powers of thought and counteract the depressing influence of a doctrine which aimed at a kind of intellectual Nihilism as far as sense-perception is

6

concerned. But when these activities became subject to the tutelage of a foreign domination this stimulus ceased to be effective. Intellectual Hinduism gave itself up to its mystic reveries and ceased to interest itself in original artistic production.

Deprived on the one hand of the intellectual stimulus which gave it life, and, on the other, of the physical stimulus of state patronage, promoting a natural and healthy activity, it is not surprising that Indian sculpture of the present day has sunk to a stereotyped repetition of conventional forms, in which the highest poetic qualities of a "fine" art are seldom to be found.

But this very conventionalism and stereotyped tradition have, nevertheless, been the means of retaining artistic qualities which raise some modern Indian architectural sculpture far above the level of what Anglo-Indians and educated Indians perversely substitute for it.

CHAPTER V

THE HUMAN IDEAL AND THE SCULPTURES OF BHARHUT, SANCHI, AND AMARÂVATI

We will now proceed to make acquaintance with a phase of Indian religious art which will appeal to most Europeans more than the study of oriental iconography, for it brings us down from the transcendental heights of philosophic Hinduism to the plane of our common humanity.

It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that though it might be supposed that in rendering the ordinary human form and events of human existence Indian art is on exactly the same plane of thought as European, there is, nevertheless, a wide difference between them. Greek and Italian art would bring the gods to earth and make them the most beautiful of men ; Indian art raises men up to heaven and makes them even as the gods. And until the fine arts were kept quite apart from religion, as in the Mogul period, the types of divine beauty established by artistic and ritualistic tradition profoundly influenced the Indian artist's outlook upon life and the nature he saw around him.

The ideal of manly beauty he set before himself was not represented by a Rajput warrior, but by the divine Buddha, Krishna, or Siva. His ideal of female beauty was not seen in the fairest of Indian women, but in Parvati, or in the heavenly Apsarases. Before, then, we begin to assume that Indian sculptors never realised the same degree of technical achievement as Praxiteles or Michelangelo, we must always clearly understand how far it is possible to draw any comparison between them; and, except in their mutual reverence for the beauties of Nature, and in the important part which art took in national life and education, there are not many points of analogy in the spirit of classic art and Indian.

In an age when reading and writing are rare accomplishments, the arts of painting and sculpture play a part in national life and education hardly to be realised nowadays. In the great epoch of Indian religious art which we are reviewing, art, religion, and education had no existence apart from each other as they have in this age of specialisation and materialism. They were similar and interchangeable forms and expressions of national thought and culture. The Buddhist monks were often themselves practising artists, and, like the Christian artist-monks of the Middle Ages, they used the arts, not for vulgar amusement and distraction, but as instruments for the spiritual and intellectual improvement of the people.

And, like all true artists, they were keen observers and lovers of Nature. In choosing the places for their retreats, they always had the keenest eye for the beauties of hill and plain, mountain, forest, river, and sea. Dr. Burgess thus describes the prospect from the Elephanta caves, the sculptures of which we have discussed in the previous chapter:

"The view from the front of the cave is one of exceeding beauty, commanding the fine bay between Elephanta, Trombay, and the mainland. From the grey dawn of morning till the shades of night close upon it, whether crowded with the white sails of hundreds of fishing craft, or only marked here and there with one or two passenger boats, and perhaps a small steamer, it is an ever-fresh and varying scene of beauty. And a few steps from the porch will lead the visitor to the site of an old *bangalá* which commands the prospect to the south-west of Bombay and its splendid harbour, with Butcher Island in the foreground. Any true lover of Nature will feel himself amply rewarded by the magnificent views to be here enjoyed."

But beauty, for them, was for religion and love, not for pleasure only; they had the artistic insight which sees beneath and beyond the external facts and beauties of Nature. They always sought for and found—

> Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good (God) in everything.

The alternative reading of Shakespeare's text would make the philosophic Duke express perfectly the Eastern outlook upon Nature. Mr. J. Griffiths, in noticing the wonderful position of the Ajanta cave-temples, says:

> "All the forces of Nature are considered by devout Buddhists as expressions and symbols of the faith. For the vulgar, the waterfall or the wind turns the mechanical prayer-wheel, but to those devoted to meditation and the cultivation of a higher life, the mere sound of running water, the rustle of the leaves as the wind plays through them, the movement of the clouds of the sky, and the manifold life and activity of the creatures of the jungle, are so many hymns of praise to the great harmonious law enunciated by the life of Buddha." [1]

The people themselves shared fully in the feeling of their spiritual leaders. To take the pilgrim's staff in hand and leave the worldly life, to be one with Nature in all her moods, was the supreme desire of every devout Buddhist or Hindu, whatever his sect might be. The pious Buddhist would set out to follow, step by step, the Master's life on earth, from his birthplace in the Lumbini garden to the final accomplishment of Nirvana at Kusinara. And, as the great story was told again and again round the camp-fires at night, the teeming life in the jungle around seemed to become part of it, and wondrous legends grew of the

[1] "Ajanta Caves," Introd., p. 1.

jâtakas, the Master's pre-existence in the form of bird or beast, preparing, by many an act of devotion and self-sacrifice, to show the way of release for suffering humanity.

And then, as now, Siva's followers climbed the steep Himalayan slopes, up through a paradise of tree and flower, above the dark forests of the mighty deodar, to the region of cloud and mist and eternal ice and snow; gazing there with awe on the shining glories of the silver mountain where the great god sat in sublime meditation.

Others would explore the country made sacred in national song and legend; they would tread the sacred hill of Chitrakuta and track the course of Rama's and Sita's wanderings by the banks of the Godavery, and in the forests of the Deccan; roam over the battlefields of the heroes of the Mahâbhârata, and the scenes of Krishna's adventures and amours among the pastures of Brindaban.

And wherever the pilgrims went, and whatever might be their creed, the gods were with them always. They felt their presence in the countless denizens, seen and unseen, of forest, field, or flood. They heard them in the many voices of the jungle; in the winds which swept through the forest trees, and in the waters which poured down from their heaven-built Himalayan throne. They knew their power and beauty by the rising and setting of the sun; by the radiant light and heat of midday; by the glories of the Eastern

moonlit nights; by the majestic gathering of the monsoon clouds; by the fury of the cyclone, the lightning-flash and thunder, and the cheerful dripping of the life-giving rain. From this devout communion with Nature in all the marvellous diversity of her tropical moods, came the inspiration of an art possessing a richness of imagery and wealth of elaboration which seem bewildering and annoying to our dull Northern ways of thinking.

Their art was glowing with spontaneous warmth and fantasy, like the Nature which inspired it. Yet it was not based upon a sensual Nature-worship, like Hellenic art, but upon Nature regarded as the manifestation of one great Universal Law. It was less coldly reasoned than the art of Greece, but far more spiritual; for the poets and philosophers of a highly intellectual age joined in using this jungle-lore which clung round national history and popular beliefs as a framework for moral and spiritual instruction, inculcating by poetry, fable, and allegory the supreme law of life which Buddha preached, and the eternal truth of the Immanence of God.

The schools of art were not the courts and palaces of kings, or offices of state, but the monasteries and the sacred shrines at which the pilgrims paid their devotions. The early history of this art and architecture belongs to a period when, the greater part of the country being covered by dense forests, the most convenient material for

building and sculpture was wood. But, though in this perishable material no actual monuments of this earliest period have survived to the present day, we can gather a clear idea of the style from the monuments of Asoka's time, in which all the forms of the ancient wooden construction began to be copied in stone, and from the pictures of the buildings given in the Ajanta cave-paintings. The modern wooden architecture of the sub-Himalayan countries, like Nepal, and that of Burma, has many affinities with it.

It is not, however, my purpose to attempt a history of Indian fine art, but rather to show the highest development of it at a time when the monasteries and sacred shrines had become great national sculpture and picture galleries; and when, after many centuries, the traditions of Indian art-practice had become perfected into a science which was afterwards reduced to writing, and recorded in the literature of Indian ritual and religion. Modern "educated" Indians, to their shame be it said, are profoundly ignorant of and indifferent to this great science, the traditions of which are kept alive by the artistic castes of the present day; though they are fast being crushed under the vandal heel of what we mis-call civilisation, just as the traditions of the mediæval artists and craftsmen have been extinguished in Europe by a barbarous and godless commercialism.

The practice of circumambulating a sacred shrine, one of the oldest of religious observances,

gave rise to the decoration of the pilgrims' procession-paths with painted and sculptured representatives of sacred symbols and images, or illustrations of religious history and dogma. The painted decoration was generally the work of the Buddhist monks; the sculptures and images in the precious metals were often the gifts of kings or other wealthy devotees.

The sculptured stone rails which enclosed the procession-paths at Bharhut, Sanchi and Amarâvati have been minutely described and illustrated in archæological works; and as they by no means represent the highest type of Indian sculpture it is unnecessary to enter into detailed critical examination of them. Artistically they are extremely interesting because they illustrate the development of Indian sculpture from the time of Asoka (263-221 B.C.), to whose reign the Bharhut rail is attributed, down to about A.D. 170, the supposed date of the later Amarâvati sculptures.

Obviously the construction of these rails is borrowed from wooden prototypes; but it is not only in the constructional forms that they give indirect evidence of the ancient crafts of India, which are frequently referred to in the Râmâyana and Mahâbhârata. The whole technique of the sculpture is a curious rendering in stone of the craftsmanship of wood-carvers, metal-workers and painters, and, as nothing similar to it is to be found in the sculpture of other countries, it will be interesting to inquire how this peculiar style originated.

Before the time of Asoka the principal artistic crafts of India, exclusive of weaving, were those of painting, wood-carving and metal-work. The two former were no doubt practised in the Buddhist monasteries of Northern India, as they are now in Nepal and Tibet. It must not be supposed that the mason's and stone-carver's art was unknown; but only that, as in all countries where wood is cheap and plentiful, the latter material was generally preferred for structural and decorative purposes: and, therefore, the wood-carvers greatly exceeded in numbers those who worked stone.

When Asoka succeeded to an empire greater than India had ever known before, and settled down as a devout Buddhist to practise the arts of peace, he employed the energies of his subjects in constructing a vast number of monuments and offices for the new state religion and many magnificent public buildings; and, as he desired them to be more permanent than the ordinary buildings of his day, he made most of them of brick and stone.

"Asoka," says Mr. Vincent Smith, "was a great builder, and so deep was the impression made on the popular imagination by the extent and magnificence of his architectural works that legend credited him with the creation of 84,000 *stupas*, or sacred cupolas, within the space of three years. When Fa-hien, the Chinese pilgrim, visited Pâtaliputra, the capital, at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., in the reign of Chandragupta Vikramâditya, the palace of

Asoka was still standing, and was deemed to have been wrought by supernatural agency.

"'The royal palace and walls in the midst of the city which exist now as of old, were all made by the spirits which he employed, and which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture work in a way which no human hands of this world could accomplish.'"—*Early History of India*, p. 144.

This extraordinary activity in building must have created a demand for skilled masons and sculptors much greater than India could supply; and, just as in later times Shah Jahan brought masons from Samarkand, Shiraz, and Baghdad, to assist in building the Taj Mahal, so doubtless Asoka imported similar craftsmen from the great cities of Western Asia. We can still recognise their handiwork in the magnificent monolithic pillars, some of which are fifty feet in height, and about fifty tons in weight, with which Asoka marked many of the sacred places of Buddhism. One of these, which has recently been unearthed at Sarnath, on the spot where Buddha preached his first sermon,[1] is a perfect specimen of the stone-mason's and carver's art, but purely Persian in style.

The chief direction of all these works would have remained in Indian hands, and the great majority of the craftsmen must have been Indian also,

[1] See "Benares, the Sacred City," by the author. (Blackie & Sons.)

and therefore more accustomed to work in wood and metal than in stone. The wood-carvers found in the red sandstone which abounds in Northern India an excellent material, which could be worked with practically the same tools as they had always used: there was no necessity for them to alter their usual technique. Fergusson thought that the surprising degree of technical skill shown in the Bharhut sculptures proved that stone must have been a material perfectly familiar to the craftsmen who executed them, and that their skill must have been acquired by centuries of practice in the same material; but, on technical grounds, I see no reason to suppose that this was the case. Even now there is very little difference in the tools used in India for decorative purposes by wood, stone, and metal workers, and technical skill acquired in the material could easily be transferred to another. The technique of the Bharhut relief suggests that they were the work of skilled wood-carvers attempting for the first time to use stone instead of wood. This would explain why the sculpture of the early stone monuments of India shows a much higher degree of technical perfection than is found in the first attempts at stone-carving of a primitive state of art-culture. The sculptors were not tyros in craftsmanship, but skilled wood-carvers, or sometimes metal-workers.

Asoka was by principle averse to warfare, and India, under the greater part of his rule, enjoyed

a profound peace, through the suppression of the rivalry and jealousy of the numerous petty states, then consolidated into one great empire. There was, therefore, less occupation for those who manufactured and ornamented weapons of war, but a great demand for skilled craftsmen in decorating the sacred shrines of Buddhism. The artist-monks, also, now that Buddhism was the state religion, under the patronage of a powerful sovereign, were not satisfied with humble *stupas* and monasteries of brick or clay, decorated with fresco paintings on plaster; they faced them with stone, and made painted *relievos* instead of frescoes.

These circumstances explain the peculiar technical characteristics of the Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amarâvati sculptures. So vast was the labour bestowed on the decoration of the great Buddhist monuments that each one became a permanent art-centre and created a school of its own. The technical traditions were handed on from one generation of craftsmen to another, and so we find that even centuries afterwards, when they were dealing with the hard limestone of Amarâvati, they still reproduced in stone the artistic processes of the days before Asoka. Only in Western India, and a few other localities, where Asoka's zeal for the Buddhist faith led to the excavation of temples and monasteries out of the solid rock, the craftsmen were forced to modify their methods, and another school was created, with a perfectly glyptic style of technique, which

PLATE XXVIII



RELIEF FROM BHARHUT

(The Sudarsanâ Yakshini)

culminated in the magnificent sculptures of Elephanta and Ellora already illustrated.

The Bharhut rail is, according to Fergusson, the most interesting monument in India from an historical point of view. It is especially important for the study of Indian sculpture, because it shows the degree of technical development the fine arts in India had reached before India came in contact with the Graeco-Roman art of Gandhāra, before the Indian artistic ideal had been evolved, and before Indian artistic philosophy had been differentiated from that of Europe. Fergusson says:

"It cannot be too strongly insisted that the art here displayed is purely indigenous. There is absolutely no trace of Egyptian influence; it is, indeed, in every detail antagonistic to that art. Nor is there any trace of classical art; nor can it be affirmed that anything here could have been borrowed directly from Babylonia or Assyria. The capitals of the pillars do resemble somewhat those of Persepolis, and the honeysuckle ornaments point in the same direction; but, barring that, the art, especially the figure-sculpture belonging to the rail, seems an art elaborated on the spot by Indians, and by Indians only."[1]

Fergusson's judgment in this matter, though disputed by some archæologists, seems to me to be perfectly sound. We must found our theories on the style as a whole, taking into consideration the esoteric elements, not the external accretions,

[1] "History of Indian Architecture," p. 89.

as those which determine the character and origin of it. The ordinary archæological method is rather like trying to ascertain the nature and growth of an oyster by analysing the crust outside its shell, ignoring the living organism, and perhaps a pearl, within.

The Bharhut sculptors also show the interesting fact that in Asoka's time the worship of the person of Buddha was not a part of Buddhist ritual: "Everything is Buddhist, but it is Buddhism without Buddha. He nowhere appears either as a heavenly person to be worshipped or even as an ascetic." The objects which attract the reverent homage of both men and beasts are the symbols of the faith: the sacred footprints, the bodhi-tree in which the Presence dwelt, but not the Presence itself.

Much of the figure-sculpture at Bharhut is very primitive, but there is some which proves that, several centuries before the Gandharan school had developed its ideal, Indian sculptors had by their own unaided efforts achieved no mean skill in rendering the human form.

The figure called Sudarsanâ Yakshini (Plate XXVIII.) is one of the best of a series of semi-divine beings which appear as guardians at the four entrances, on the upright supports of the rail. The two most obvious points to be noticed in it are, first, that the technique is entirely that of a wood-carver; and, second, that the treatment is frankly naturalistic. There is no attempt to

idealise: no indication of the abnormally narrow waist, or of the complete suppression of the muscular details which are characteristic of all later Indian sculpture. Here we have "the shoulders loaded with broad chains, the arms and legs covered with metal rings, and the body encircled with richly linked girdles," which, according to Professor Grünwedel, prevented Indian sculptors from producing an anatomically correct form. Yet the principal anatomical facts are remarkably well given, especially the modelling of the torso and the difficult movement of the hips. In fact, it is very astonishing that in this, one of the earliest monuments of Indian art, we find such a high degree of technical achievement, and such a careful study of anatomy.

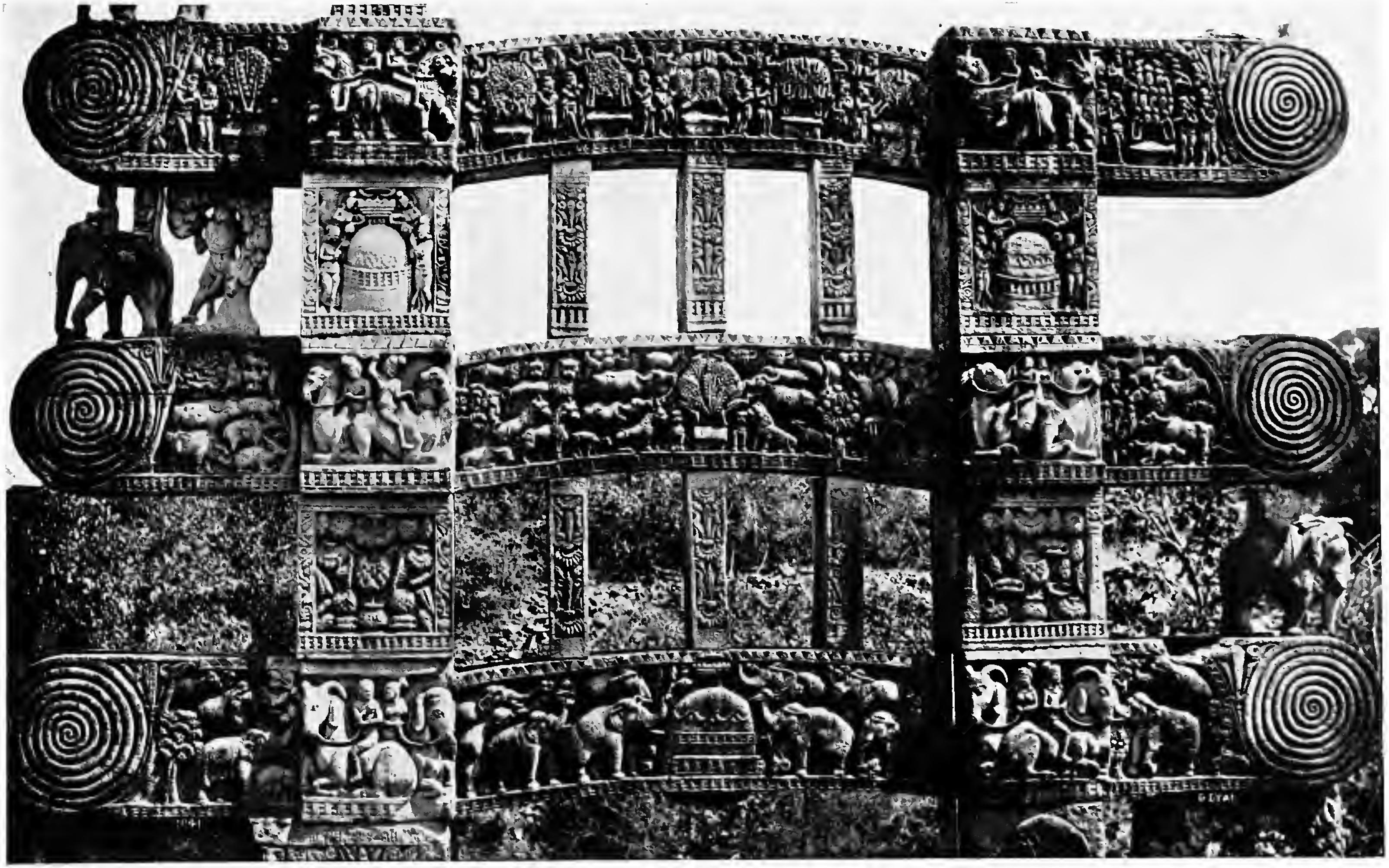
If we accept the conclusion of archæologists that the Indian artistic ideal is a feeble attempt to imitate the Gandharan models, or those of Græco-Roman art, we must assume that, many centuries later than these Bharhut sculptures, when every other branch of art had progressed and India was the acknowledged head of the scientific world, Indian sculptors and painters had actually retrograded in their art, and were less proficient in anatomical knowledge than the artists of Asoka's time. The only alternative to this conclusion is that which I propose, that at some period after the Bharhut and Sanchi sculptures Indian artists abandoned purely naturalistic aims and adopted an ideal of their own devising.

The Sanchi sculptures are supposed to cover a period beginning with Asoka's reign, down to about 140 B.C. It would require a whole volume to do them justice, but, except as an important link in the evolution of the Indian ideal, they do not belong to the scope of this work. They provide, however, a most wonderful picture of Indian life and thought, as I have described at the beginning of this chapter. The visits of the pilgrims to the sacred shrines, the stories told by the camp-fires, the fabled pre-existences of Buddha in the form of bird and beast, and all the mysteries of the untrodden primeval forests, are revealed in a series of sculptures which, besides being most valuable for historical purposes, makes a most delightful, original Indian jungle-book. We can see, also, how strongly the idea of the essential unity of creation had taken hold of the Indian mind. For all Nature is shown animated by a single purpose; man and beast, gods and demi-gods, and the weird monsters of Indian mythology thronging together to join in worship of the emblems of the Buddhist faith.

The Sanchi sculptors are, like those of Bharhut, entirely naturalistic in the treatment of the human form. As Fergusson says:

"All the men and women represented are human beings, acting as men and women have acted in all times, and the success or failure of the representations may consequently be judged by the same rules as are applicable to the sculptures of any other place or country. Notwithstanding this, the mode

PLATE XXIX



THE EASTERN GATEWAY, SANCHI

of treatment is so original and local that it is difficult to assign it to any exact position in comparison with the arts of the Western world."

The person of Buddha as a divine being receiving adoration is still unrepresented, though he appears as Prince Siddhartha and as an ascetic. There are some figures of primitive Indian divinities, such as Sri, the goddess of fortune, but they do not seem to suggest any connection with the Dhyâna or Yoga doctrine, or to represent an idealised type of body. The Indian artistic ideal, if it had been evolved at all, had not yet been introduced into Buddhism.

For European artists the greatest interest of the Sanchi sculptures, apart from their decorative beauty, will probably be in their wonderfully truthful and skilful rendering of animal life. This is especially remarkable in the East Gateway, one of the latest of the Sanchi sculptures, illustrated in Plate XXIX.

Yet some of the single detached figures are extremely good, and show a great advance upon the art of Bharhut, though the style is similar. Plate XXX. is an illustration of a female figure, singularly beautiful in movement and strongly modelled, which forms a bracket on the right-hand side of the same gateway. The style of it shows no trace of the Hellenic tradition, nor of the idealism which developed in later Indian sculpture. It is a piece of simple, forceful realism by Indian sculptors, before any attempt was made by them

to idealise the human form. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to find among the Gandharan sculptures anything to surpass it, either in technique or in artistic feeling.

Though the wooden forms of construction are retained, the later sculptures of Sanchi, of which these are examples, show a perfect familiarity with the technique of stone-carving and great freedom in execution. The best figure-sculpture found here, taken in conjunction with that of Bharhut, make it abundantly clear that before the Sanchi gateways were finished, or long before any of the Gandharan sculptures were executed, India had developed an original school of sculpture, and was no longer dependent upon foreign aid, as it was, to some extent, in the time of Asoka. Indian art continued to assimilate foreign elements, as every living art will. The Gandharan sculptors, no doubt, occasionally found employment in India, but they did not come there as teachers, for India had nothing to learn from them in technique, and she deliberately chose ideals different to those of Greece.

The next important series of sculptures representing early Indian life and history are those of Amarâvati,[1] a Buddhist settlement on the banks of the Krishna river, in Madras, probably a half-way house for those adventurous emigrants from India's north-western seaports who after-

[1] Some of them are now in the British Museum, a few in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, but most of the finest and best-preserved are in the Central Museum, Madras.



FIGURE FROM THE EASTERN GATEWAY, SANCHI

wards colonised Java and Kambodia. They are attributed to the last half of the second century A.D., so there is an interval of something like three centuries between them and the later Sanchi sculptures. It is quite evident that there must have been a great deal of Indian sculpture produced in the interval, but very little of it remains, no doubt for the same reason that nothing has been found before the time of Asoka, namely, because most of it was executed in wood.

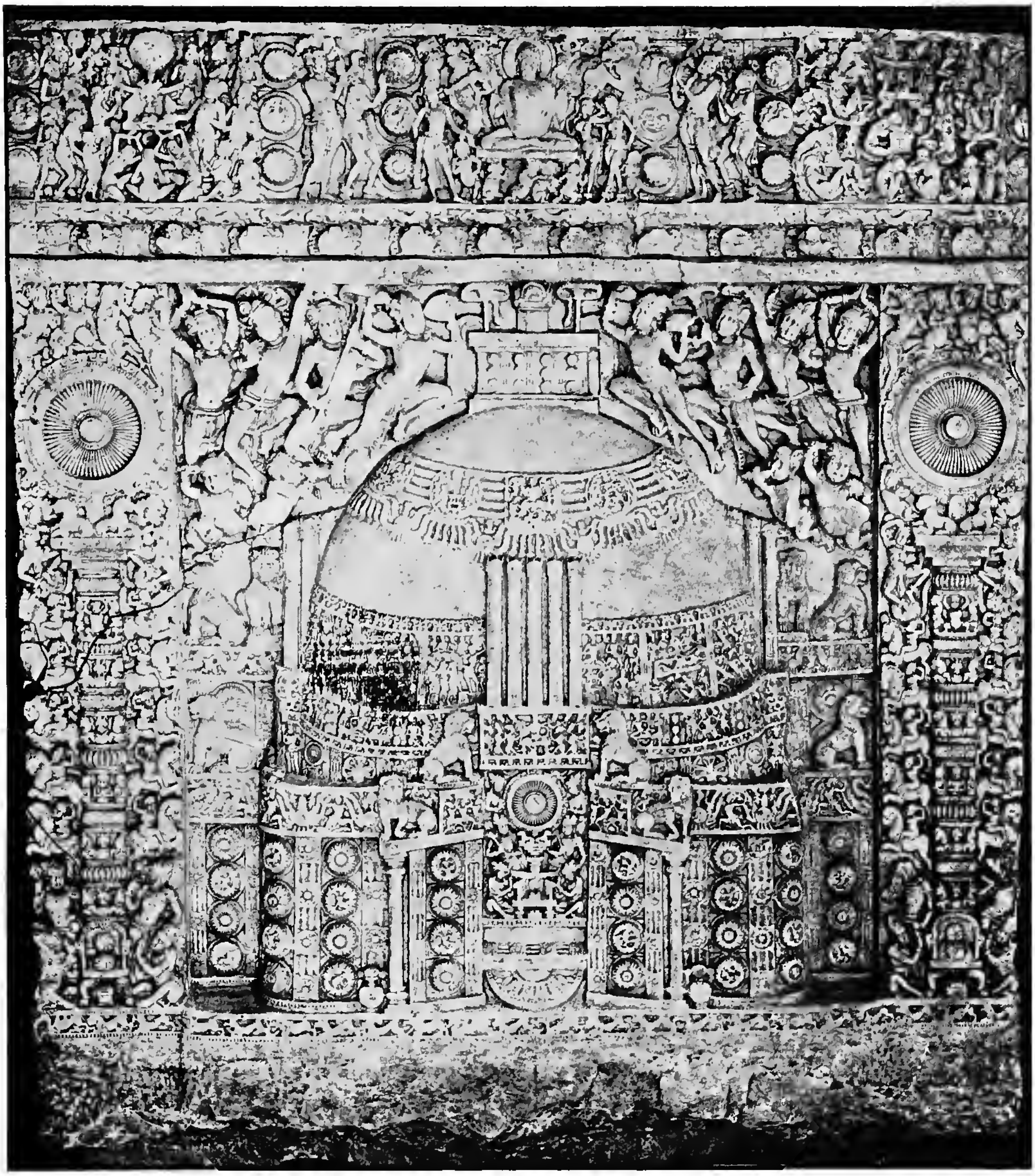
Asoka's immediate successors did not continue his great propaganda of Buddhism, so Indian architects and sculptors naturally reverted to the use of the material with which they were most familiar. In the meantime, however, on the north-west frontier of India, the Indo-Roman school of Gandhara arose. Gandhara was a country in which suitable stone for building and sculpture was more plentiful than wood; so while all the wooden, or semi-wooden, buildings constructed in India in this period have totally disappeared, the stone monasteries and the *stupas* of Gandhara have left a great deal of their rich sculptures to posterity. This, and the fact that Gandhara was closer to the outskirts of the Roman Empire, and therefore more susceptible to Græco-Roman influences than India, have given the Gandhara school a rather fictitious importance in the history of Indian art. To understand this early period of Indian art rightly we must always bear in mind that for every monument in stone

which now exists there were in India perhaps a thousand in less permanent materials, which have completely disappeared.

The Amarâvati sculptures show Buddha for the first time in Indian art as a divine being receiving worship, and as the type of Buddha closely resembles that of Gandhara, Professor Grünwedel and other archæologists infer that the Græco-Roman artists of the Gandharan kingdom supplied Indian Buddhists with the ideal of their Divinity. But the Amarâvati Buddha is not the Indian ideal of Divinity: it is a transitional type. In all the art of Amarâvati we see Indian sculpture passing from the naturalistic school of the Asokan epoch into the idealistic school in which Indian art reached its highest expression. The simple, direct naturalism of the Bharhut and Sanchi sculptures is here beginning to give place to a very pronounced style of an academic character, but wholly different to the style of Gandhara, though in the detail Gandharan, or Græco-Roman, types frequently occur.

One of the finest and best-preserved of the Amarâvati reliefs is a sculptured slab from the base of the *stupa* (Plate XXXI.) now in the Madras Museum. It represents the *stupa* itself, surrounded with its rail, with a crowd of adoring spirits, the *vidyâdharas*, hovering round its summit. These figures are perhaps the most beautiful in composition of all, and they show clearly the idealistic treatment which had developed

PLATE XXXI



RELIEF FROM AMARÂVATI

(From the base of the Great *Stupa*)

in Indian sculpture since the Asokan period. The floating movement of these heavenly spirits is conceived with rare artistic feeling and a thorough grasp of the mechanism of the human body, although the details of the muscular system are purposely suppressed.

In the centre of the frieze on the top of the slab the Buddha appears receiving worship. Here, and elsewhere in these reliefs, he is clad in the same loose robe as the Gandharan Buddhas. This partially conceals the form and makes the idealistic treatment less conspicuous than it is in the nude figures of the *vidyâdharas*, or in the Buddha of later Indian sculpture which we have seen before. In the small upright panel on the right and left of the centre are two very expressive figures of a Nâga Raja and his wife worshipping. They are well drawn and modelled with more anatomical precision than the *vidyâdharas*, as if to suggest a contrast between ordinary mortal form and a divine one.

This distinction, if it is intentional in this particular case, is not observed throughout the reliefs; nor is it characteristic of Indian sculpture as a whole. But it is easy to understand that the recognition of a special type of beauty for divine beings would very speedily resolve itself into a general idealisation of the human form in the same direction; the first step being its application as a mark of distinction for persons of high rank, and the next its adoption as a common academic standard.

The Amarâvati reliefs, so far from being inspired by Western ideals, indicate a deliberate attempt to Indianise them: except for a few obviously borrowed details and *motifs*, there is very little that is distinctively foreign about them. The style and whole method of artistic expression are developments of the Bharhut and Sanchi school, as can be seen in the beautiful group from the British Museum, Plate XXXII. The slim-waisted figure standing by the horse, probably intended for Prince Siddhartha, shows the tendency towards Indian idealism. The two female figures, charmingly natural and full of feminine grace, are ordinary human beings like those of Bharhut and Sanchi, but the execution shows no trace of the Western academic style. The exaggerated thinness of the legs in all the figures was probably less marked when the sculptures had their finishing coat of fine plaster.

The foreign elements in all the Amarâvati sculptures are not more conspicuous than those usually found in the art of any country which from its imperial position has become a centre of attraction for people of many and diverse nationalities. Nowhere do they justify the archæological assumption that Indian art at this period was in Græco-Roman leading-strings. If Indians were to apply to European art the same methods of exegesis as archæologists apply to Indian, it would be easy for them to leave Europe with hardly a shred of originality.

PLATE XXXII



RELIEF FROM AMARÂVATI

There is this in common with the Gandharan sculptures and those of Amarâvati—that both were inspired by the monastic schools of Northern India; the former employing foreign agents, the latter mostly Indian. The foreign artists of Gandhara were naturally slower in absorbing Indian impressions, derived from the philosophical schools, than the native artists. The great culture-centres of Asia at this time were the Indian universities of Takshasila, Benares, Sridhanya Kataka, on the banks of the Krishna, and Nalanda: their influence was supreme, and compared with it the whole influence of Hellenism in Indian art may be taken as a negligible factor. It is to the direct teaching and influence of these great educational institutions, rather than to the occasional intrusion of foreign suggestions and foreign technique, that we must look for an explanation of the development of Indian artistic ideals. For certainly the teaching of the Mahâyâna doctrine by Nagarjuna and the infusion of Brahmanical philosophy into Buddhism were the influences which shaped the ideals of Indian art, not the migration of Western artistic ideas eastwards. India was not then in a state of pupilage, but the teacher of all Asia, and she only borrowed Western suggestions to mould them to her own way of thinking.

"What Cluny and Clairvaux were to France in the Middle Ages," says Fergusson, "Nalanda was to Central India—the depository of all true

learning and the foundation from which it spread to all other lands of the faithful." The whole range of education in these great universities was schemed and co-ordinated with a breadth and largeness undreamt of in modern India. There were schools of painting, sculpture, and handicrafts as well as of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and other sciences; at Nalanda religion and philosophy were taught from a hundred chairs. Not less greatly planned were the equipment and environment of the colleges. Hiuen Thsang, who resided at Nalanda for several years, says it was "an enchanting abode." It had been in existence for seven centuries when he visited it. Six successive Indian kings had devoted their pious efforts to building and adorning it. The last one reorganised the work of his predecessors, opened a number of halls for conferences, and surrounded the whole convent with a single wall. One gate opened into the great college which the Chinese pilgrim thus describes:

"The richly adorned towers were arranged in regular order; the pavilions, decorated with coral, appeared like pointed hill-tops; the soaring domes reached up to the clouds, and the pinnacles of the temples seemed to be lost in the mist of the morning. From their windows one could watch the movements of the winds and clouds, and above their lofty roofs the sun and moon could be seen in conjunction.

"All around pools of translucent water shone

with the open petals of the blue lotus-flowers; here and there the lovely kanaka-trees hung down their deep red blossoms; and woods of dark mango-trees spread their shade between them. In the different courts the houses of the monks were each four stories in height. The pavilions had pillars ornamented with dragons, and beams resplendent with all the colours of the rainbow—rafters richly carved—columns ornamented with jade painted red and richly chiselled, and balustrades of carved openwork. The lintels of the doors were decorated with elegance and the roofs covered with glazed tiles of brilliant colours, which multiplied themselves by reflection, and varied the effect at every moment in a thousand manners."[1]

The groves of mango-trees and the immense tanks still remain as memorials of this splendid convent. There were thousands of these convents in India, though this was the finest of them all. To them flocked students from all parts of Asia, and from them went out the missionaries who brought Indian religion, philosophy, science, and art to the most distant parts of the continent—China, Korea, and Japan.

Among such surroundings and by such influences were nurtured and developed the culture and ideals which created the great monuments of Indian art, and such was the respect for the dignity of learning inspired by them that, according to the Chinese pilgrim, no single instance of deliberate rebellion against the rules had been

[1] "La Vie de Hiouen Thsang," by Stanislas Julien, pp. 150, 151.

known at Nalanda during the seven hundred years since the foundation of the college. Apparently they possessed a secret of which modern India is ignorant. But could love of the *alma mater* ever grow up among the squalid, hideous surroundings, unkept and uncared for, of most Indian colleges?

The Amarâvati reliefs are considered by Fergusson and Professor Grünwedel to represent the culminating point in Indian sculpture. But this view can only be upheld by those who regard as decadence, instead of a new development on a higher plane of thought, the departure from European canons which here took place. Indian sculptors reached much higher imaginative flights and achieved much greater technical triumphs, but, after Amarâvati, they adopted an ideal of beauty totally different to that of Greece. They never attempted such a minute scientific investigation of the human structure as the sculptors of the Italian Renaissance made, because it would have been useless to them in perfecting an idealistic creation based upon imagination and artistic feeling, rather than upon scientific facts.

Though they are far from being the best Indian sculpture, there is much beautiful work in them. The traditions of Sanchi are upheld in the most delightful studies of animal life, combined with extremely beautiful conventionalised ornament. The most varied and difficult movements of the human figure are drawn and modelled with great freedom and skill. The action and grouping of

the figures are singularly animated, sometimes to an exaggerated degree. In skilful composition they far surpass the contemporary school of Gandhara, and, although the sentiment seems sometimes forced and artificial, it is much more genuine than the conventional, smug pietism of the Græco-Roman or Indo-Roman sculptures.

In Indian art they take much the same place as Cellini's work holds in the sculpture of the Italian Renaissance. But technically the two rails must be considered as painted *relievos* rather than true sculpture. The artists relied upon colour instead of alternation of light and shade to give emphasis and variety to the composition, and, now that the colour is entirely gone, the effect of the sculpture, when viewed at a short distance, is comparatively cold and lifeless, in spite of the prodigious amount of labour bestowed upon it.

The Indian ideal which we see in process of evolution at Amarâvati was finally perfected several centuries later. The various types of it have been described in Chapters III. and IV. The next great series of sculptured reliefs in which Indian real life is vividly portrayed are those which adorned the procession path of the great Buddhist shrine of Bôrôbudûr, in Java, which may justly be styled the Parthenon of Asia. These must be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

BÔRÔBUDÛR, THE PARTHENON OF ASIA

BEFORE we proceed further, it is desirable to state the historical reasons for including the sculptures of Java in the category of Indian art. The connection would be clear enough from the style of the sculptures, even if historical data were wanting.

The first attempt at the colonisation of the island by Indians is attributed in the native chronicles of Java to a great and powerful prince from Gujerat, named Aji Sâka, who is said to have landed on the island about A.D. 75. He was, however, compelled to withdraw owing to a pestilence or some other calamity. This story was, perhaps, a literary embellishment of Javanese history, introduced to show the connection of the ancient royal dynasty with the Sâka kings of Northern India.

About five centuries later, or in A.D. 603, the Javanese chronicles, with more historical certainty, record another, and this time a successful, attempt, again from the west coast of India.

"It having been foretold," say the chronicles, "to a king of Kúj'rat, or Gujerat, that his kingdom would decay and go to ruin altogether, the Prince resolved to send his son to Java, and, possessing the written account of Aji Sâka, which had been preserved in his family, he gave it to his son and embarked him, with about five thousand followers, for that island. Among these followers were people skilled in agriculture, artificers, men learned in medicine, able writers, and military men.

"They sailed in six large ships and upwards of a hundred small, and, after a voyage of four months, reached what they thought to be the island of Java; but it did not accord with the account given by Ali Sâka, so they re-embarked. In a few months they came in sight of an island with a long range of mountains, and some of them, with the Prince at their head, effected a landing at the western extremity, while a part were driven southward. They soon met with the grain *jáwa-urit*, as described by Aji Sâka, and ascertained that they had at last reached their destination."

The Prince did not, however, remain long, for on clearing the forests a lingering sickness appeared among his followers, and many died from drinking the water; so he moved south and east in quest of a more salubrious position.

He found his companions at Matârem, in the centre of the island, and was proclaimed King of the country. He then wrote to inform his father of his success, and obtained a reinforcement of two thousand people.

"From this period," continue the chronicles, "Java was known and celebrated as a kingdom; an extensive commerce was carried on with Gujerat and other countries, and the Bay of Matârem was filled with adventurers from all parts.

"During the sovereignty of the Prince and his two immediate successors, the country advanced in fame and prosperity. The city of Mendang Kumulan, since called Prambanam, increased in size and splendour: artists, particularly in stone and metals, arrived from distant countries, and temples, the ruins of which are still extant, were constructed both at this place and at Bôrôbudûr in Kedu during these periods by artists from India."[1]

Aji Sâka, from whom the Buddhist rulers of Java claimed descent, was doubtless a Prince of the Sâkas, or Indo-Scythians, who invaded the Græco-Baktrian kingdom of Gandhara between 140 and 130 B.C., and founded a dynasty there. Being expelled from that country by fresh hordes of invaders, the Sâkas entered India and founded a kingdom in the peninsula of Kâthiâwâr which gradually extended over a great part of the adjacent country.

These facts explain clearly the affinities of the art of Bôrôbudûr and Prambanam with the art of India. The Sâkas, in their migration to India, had passed through the Gandhara country, and their empire in India embraced, or was contiguous to, the great art-centres of Elephanta, Ellora, and Ajanta.

[1] "History of Java," by Sir Stamford Raffles, vol. ii., p. 82 *et seq.*

The colonisation of Java was probably a sequence of the final collapse of the Sâka power in India at the beginning of the fifth century, when the Sâka kingdom of Sarâshtra, or Kâthiâwâr, was conquered by Chandragupta II.[1] After that Brahmanism supplanted Buddhism as the principal state religion in India. The Buddhist art-traditions went with the Sâka immigrants into Java, where they reached their highest expression in the magnificent sculptures of Bôrôbudûr. In India they still continued to flourish under the patronage of Hindu rulers.

The building of the splendid shrine of Bôrôbudûr, the most magnificent monument of Buddhist art in the whole of Asia, is ascribed to *circa* A.D. 750 to 800, but the decoration of it must have spread over several centuries. It was not in fact entirely completed before the Buddhist faith in Java was superseded by orthodox Brahmanism as the state religion, about the tenth century.

The plan and detailed description of the building are given in Dr. Leeman's great work on Bôrôbudûr, and in Fergusson's "History of Indian Architecture," but the chief glory of Bôrôbudûr, the five sculptured galleries, or pilgrims' procession paths, surrounding the different stories of the shrine, have never been adequately described or illustrated; Dr. Leeman's lithographed drawings, like most of the illustrations relating to

[1] See Vincent Smith's "Early History of India," pp. 186, 187.

Indian archæology, being quite useless for artistic purposes.

The whole of the great building, from the basement to the seventh story, was adorned with a series of wonderful sculptures and bas-reliefs, extending in the aggregate for a length of nearly three miles, and expounding in ordered sequence the history, mythology and philosophy of the Buddhist faith. For the devout Buddhist pilgrims who paced these sculptured galleries they were illustrated scriptures, which even the most ignorant could read, telling in living words the life-story and message of the Master. We have discussed already the Indian idealised type of Divinity, which is represented on the monument in countless images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in high and low relief, sculptured in panels round the basement and placed in niches above the different galleries. We are now only concerned with the reliefs along the procession paths which exhibit the Indian sculptor's highest achievements in the treatment of scenes of real, or quasi-real, life. Fortunately, though some have suffered by exposure to the weather, or from shocks of earthquake, they have escaped the ruthless vandalism to which nearly all works of art in India have been subject.

These reliefs give one hundred and twenty scenes from the life of Buddha, and a similar number from the *jâtakas*—the legends of his previous births. The execution of such a vast work

PLATE XXXIII



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

naturally occupied many generations, and obviously they belong to different periods and indicate many different degrees of artistic perfection. The six reproductions given in Plates XXXIII. to XXXVIII. will, however, show the extraordinary beauty of the best of them. They are from a splendid set of photographs made in 1872 for the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences by Mr. J. van Kinsbergen.

The study of these sculptures should be approached, not with the stale copy-book rules with which the average educated European often tries to prove the inferiority of Indian art and his own superior discernment, but with an appreciation of the purpose for which they were intended, and an honest endeavour to comprehend, as Taine would say, the soul of the people to whom they were addressed.

To compare them with the Panathenaic frieze of the Parthenon would serve no useful purpose, though as artistic achievements of the highest class the best Bôrôbudûr sculptures would not suffer by the comparison. There is as little kinship between the academic refinement of the Parthenon sculptures and this supremely devout and spontaneous art as there is between Indian and Hellenic religious thought. They are much more closely allied in feeling and expression to the sculptures of Donatello and those of the best Italian masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

A very near parallel may be found in the cele-

brated bronze doors of the Baptistery of Florence by Lorenzo Ghiberti, one of the great masterpieces of Italian art of which Michelangelo is reported to have said that they were "fit to be the gates of Paradise." In these gates a number of Biblical scenes are treated in a series of relief panels with similar accessories to those used by the Bôrôbudûr sculptors, *i.e.* the figures are accompanied by representations of temples, houses, trees, clouds, water, and landscape subjects.

The Italian master has achieved a technical triumph which won for him the rapturous applause of the *virtuosi* of his day, yet by the use of perspective and an excessive number of planes of relief, in the attempt to produce the illusion of pictorial effects, he has sacrificed breadth and dignity and overstepped the limitations of the plastic art. In spite of its extraordinary technical qualities the main impression given by Ghiberti's masterpiece is that the artist was more concerned in exhibiting his skill to his fellow-citizens than in producing the most perfect and reverent rendering of the sacred subject.

The Bôrôbudûr sculptors, with much deeper reverence and less self-consciousness, show conclusively that art is greater than artifice. The very simplicity and unaffected *naïveté* of their style are much more impressive and convincing than the elaborate efforts of the Italian, who with all his wonderful technique is far behind in imagination and artistic feeling. Especially in

the magnificent conventionalism of the accessories —the trees, buildings, ships, etc.—does the art of Bôrôbudûr rise above the art of Ghiberti.

The great charm of the Bôrôbudûr sculptures lies in their absolute truth of expression, a truthfulness which is the more conspicuous because the artists have not tied themselves to the petty rules and regulations on which the modern *dilettante* critic so often bases his judgment of works of art. What modern Academician would dare to disregard the relative proportion between human figures and the accessory trees, houses, temples, elephants, oxen, and carts as these men have done —not because they did not *know*, but because they felt the story must be told in that way? And yet the disproportion does not jar, it only contributes marvellously to the strength of the story-telling and to the richness of the decorative effect.

The artists who conceived these sculptures were not aiming at the applause of their fellow-men, but trying to tell the story of the Master in the way they conceived He had told it, offering their labour and skill as a devout gift to His shrine. Art seems to reach its highest and to go deepest when all that is small and common is excluded, when the effort of the artist is invisible, and when Nature, purified by the God-given powers of man, is, as it were, re-born. The simple life these men led left them in peace to concentrate their whole soul on their work, and kept their minds free and able to listen to the voices of Nature and of their

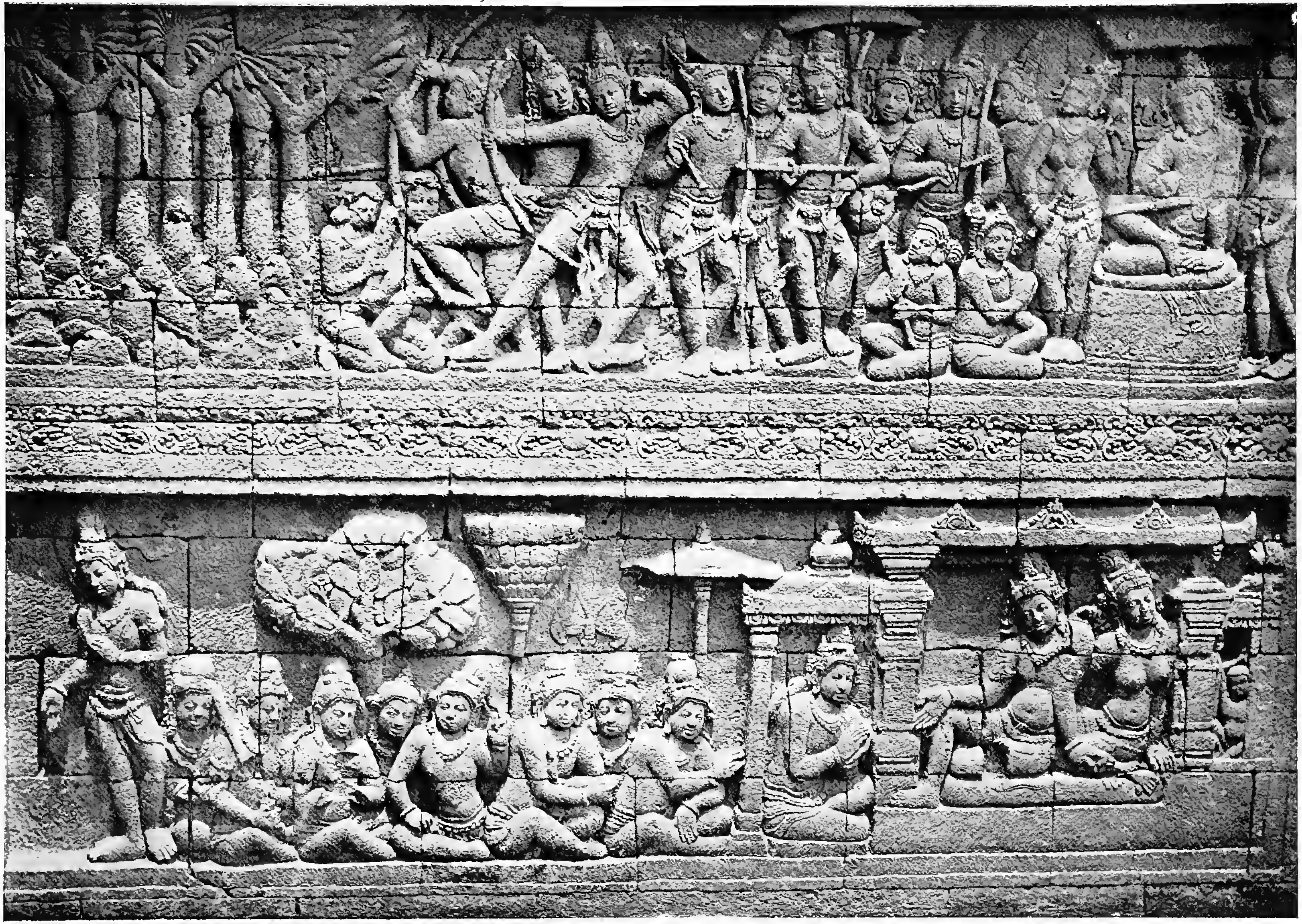
own inspiration—the soul of Nature speaking to the soul of man.

They loved and reverenced the Buddha with all their heart, and through the directness and strength of this feeling, and because there was nothing to jar upon it in their life and surroundings, they, with the great gifts they had, could show what they felt without feebleness and without faltering. The spiritual power of their art has broken the chains of technical rules, risen above all thought of what critics call right or wrong, and speaks with divinely inspired words straight to the heart of the listener. In this heaven-born quality of inspiration European art has rarely equalled, and never excelled, the art of Bôrôbudûr.

Just as we have seen in the Indian ideal type, the smaller anatomical details of the figures are suppressed, but the real spark of life—the essence of feeling—is wonderfully manifested. Every group and every figure are absolutely true and sincere in expression of face, gesture, and pose of body; and the actions which link the various groups and single figures together are strongly and simply told, without effort or striving for effect—it was so, because so it could only be!

What wonderful descriptive power and truth of feeling there are in the lower panel of Plate XXXIII., where the dancer is performing before a prince, no doubt an incident in the early life of Buddha, when he was known as the Prince Siddhartha! How absorbed are the musicians in

PLATE XXXIV



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

their accompaniment of the dance! They are only filled with the thought of doing their very best, of bringing from their instruments the sweetest and most harmonious sounds which might give pleasure to their lord. Most of the musicians have downcast eyes, one only—the farthest away—dares lift up her eyes to the throne.

The dancing figure, full of grace and dignity, revels in the rhythm of the dance. It is impossible to study it and not to see that here again reverence and the desire to please fill the performer. The artist has expressed this with the simple power of what he felt himself, showing what he surely would have tried to do had he been the performer. The Prince seated on the throne with his wife at his side is a noble, pensive figure. He is pleased with the music and the dance, but his thoughts are far, far away. This again is a perfectly true note. The instinct which led the artist to express just this touches the centre of true feeling.

The group on the right of the throne, composed with a refined decorative sense, indicates quiet, modest beings, both men and beasts, wholly absorbed in the music.

In the panel above this, King Suddhodhana, the father of Prince Siddhartha, is distributing presents to *bhiksus*—devotees who have consecrated themselves to a religious life. Here again it is delightful to feel the warmth with which the artist has expressed the goodwill with which the presents are

given. The disciples of the holy man on the left, loaded with good things from the King's hands, bring the gifts to their master with the best of good feelings. The first figure, who has two large fruits in his hands, offers them tenderly and lovingly. We know at once that they are the very best fruits that could possibly be gathered. These adoring disciples are filled with desire to refresh the body of the saint, and in their movements there is a silent prayer that he will take care of himself for their sakes. But the thought for his physical welfare does not for a moment interfere with the depth of their reverence for him.

The upper panels of Plates XXXIV. and XXXVI. show us Prince Siddhartha again, before the heavenly dignity of Buddhahood had transfigured him. Although the artist, in his treatment of the figure, has quite unconsciously been influenced by the Indian traditions of the divine ideal, he has known quite well to express with perfect clearness that this is only the man, although the Chosen One. The difference between him here and where he is represented as the Buddha—the Enlightened—is quite obvious, even without the distinction made by the nimbus round his head.

The artist has expressed it quite simply and forcibly, both by the action of the principal figure and by the atmosphere he has created round him. The followers of the Prince in Plate XXXVI. behave with perfect respect to their master, but there is none of the adoring reverence which Indian

artists know how to express so wonderfully. The attitude of the Prince himself is free and noble, but quite without the touch of divine dignity.

The other panel (Plate XXXIV.) shows him when he was competing with other Sâkya lords, his cousins, at feats-of-arms for the hand of the fair Yasôdhara. The scene is described by Sir Edwin Arnold in "The Light of Asia":

> Then Nanda challenged for the arrow-test
> And set a brazen drum six gows away,
> Ardjuna six and Devadatta eight;
> But Prince Siddhartha bade them set his drum
> Ten gows from off the line, until it seemed
> A cowry-shell for target. Then they loosed
> And Nanda pierced his drum, Ardjuna his,
> And Devadatta drove a well-aimed shaft
> Through both sides of his mark, so that the crowd
> Marvelled and cried; and sweet Yasôdhara
> Dropped the gold sari o'er her fearful eyes,
> Lest she should see her Prince's arrow fail.

The bow first offered him Siddhartha broke in testing it, and then called for a bow "more fit for Sâkya lords to use,"—the famous bow of Sinhahânu, kept in the temple, which no man yet had been able to draw:

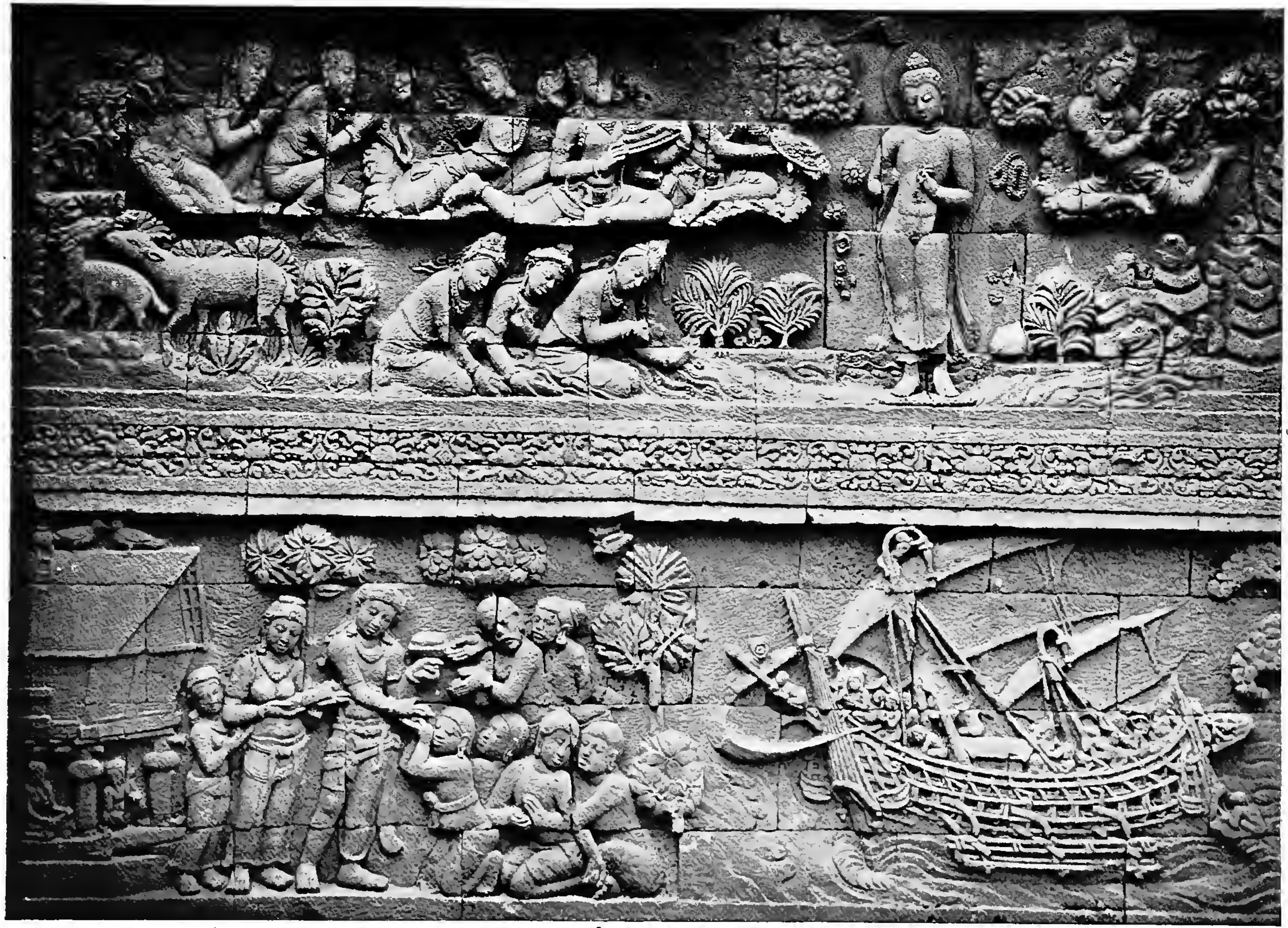
> Twice Siddhartha tried
> Its strength across his knee, then spake—"Shoot now
> With this, my cousins!" but they could not bring
> The stubborn arms a hair's breadth nigher use;
> Then the Prince, lightly leaning, bent the bow.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Then lifting fair a shaft, he drew and loosed,
> And the keen arrow clave the sky and drave
> Right through that farthest drum, nor stayed its flight,
> But skimmed the plain beyond, past reach of eye.

The artist has not here attempted to make a set composition, with the sole object of pleasing the eye; nor has he tried to indicate any supernatural quality in the Prince's strength. He has just followed the instinct of his genius and shown us the incident as it might have occurred in the real Court life of his time. The simplicity and unconventionality with which the tale is told gives it its charm, and the student of the present day who reads these panels can feel the strength of the artist's power, just as the myriads of devout pilgrims who reverently paced the procession paths of Bôrôbudûr must have felt it in the centuries that are gone.

The upper panel in the next plate, XXXV., tells the story of the conversion of the Javanese to Buddhism in the beautiful legend that Buddha himself came over the sea, floating on a lotus-flower, to give his divine message to the people. Here we have no longer the man with human desires and aims, but the Buddha in the full glory of his divinity. He has passed through all the phases of this worldly life, and through all the sufferings. He is neither the royal Prince nor the ascetic wasted and worn; all his struggles and trials are finished now, through all those gates he has passed. Now he is the noble, purified Soul, in a noble body filled with heavenly bliss.

Every creature that comes near is conscious of it. The spirits of the upper air, the Vidyâdharas and Siddhas, whose voices the pilgrims heard so

PLATE XXXV



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

often in their wanderings, flock round him, joyously strewing his path with flowers, feeling and rejoicing in the power of purity which goes out from him. The Nâgas, the water-sprites, raise their heads to do him homage, and the princes of the earth, overwhelmed by the strength of his divine dignity, prostrate themselves at his feet in silent adoration.

The doe from the forest knows at once that her King and Protector has come, He who in His boundless love once offered His life for hers. She whispers the joyful tidings to her little one, which turns its head with curiosity to look upon Him whom all Nature worships.

Note how finely the artist has shown the difference in the feelings of the spirits of the air, who have shaken off the grosser attachments of the earth, and those of the human beings still chained to the desires and passions of this life. Man is all humility, prostrating himself on bended knees, nor daring to lift his head in the presence of such divine purity. The spirits are only filled with free and careless joy. They hasten on all sides bringing the symbols of His divinity and the offerings due to the Blessed One.

The subject of the panel below, with the splendid relief of a ship in full sail, seems to be connected with the history of the colonisation of Java by Indians, which has been already narrated.[1] The ship, magnificent in design and movement, is a

[1] See pp. 111, 112.

masterpiece in itself. It tells more plainly than words the perils which the Prince of Gujerat and his companions encountered on the long and difficult voyage from the west coast of India. But these are over now. The sailors are hastening to furl the sails and bring the ship to anchor.

The contrast between the perils of the deep and the peaceful security of the haven they have now reached is drawn with the same extraordinary strength and truth of feeling which characterise all these reliefs. The Prince, with his wife and child, have already landed, and the simple and charming group on the left shows their meeting with the inhabitants. They are kneeling before the Prince and receiving thankfully the presents which he brings. On the roof of the native house two doves sit billing and cooing.

The lower panel of the next illustration, Plate XXXVI., is one of the most beautiful and perfectly preserved of the whole series. We think at once of Tanagra. Yes, but the pretty domestic art of Tanagra never produced anything so great as this. It is Tanagra art, without its coquetry, chastened and strengthened by a profound religious sentiment. The scene is one which may be witnessed every day in any Indian village, but the inspiration of the art which created such a masterpiece lives no longer.

It is only a group of Indian women drawing water from the village tank, under the shade of the sacred tree next to the village temple. One

PLATE XXXVI



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

of them bending over the lotus-covered water is just filling her vessel, watching it intently as she draws it up with her left hand, while her right is raised to grasp it when it comes within reach.

Some with their vessels filled and balanced truly on their heads are already moving off with a queenly step, and wend their way towards the village shrine. Others are approaching the water with their empty vessels. And one, apart from the rest, has placed her vessel on the ground, and, leaving her household cares awhile, kneels at the feet of the Master, listening with rapt attention to words full of tenderness and divine compassion such as man never spake before.

How marvellously the whole scene lives and moves, and what an atmosphere of purity, freshness, and womanly grace breathes through it all! We seem to feel the brightness of the Indian morning and hear the twittering of the birds as they fly from tree to tree and hover round the temple roof. Every figure is full of unconscious charm and dignity; every movement tells, but there is no posing for effect, no effort of the artist to show his cleverness. The simplicity of the treatment is as wonderful as its strength. Where Ghiberti or any modern European sculptor would use half a dozen planes of relief, the Indian artist is content with one or two, and tells his story with much greater vividness and truthful feeling.

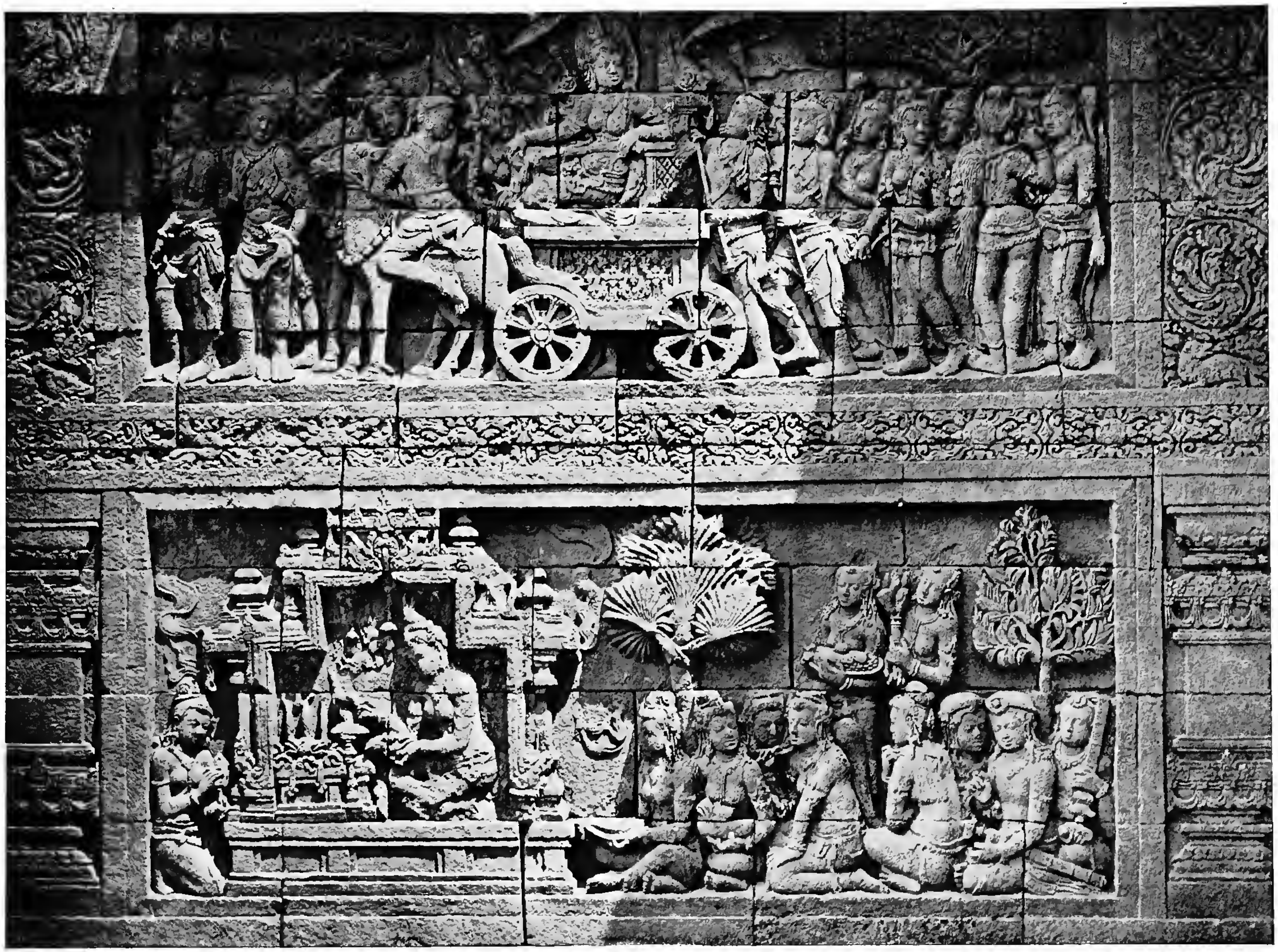
And over all there is an undefinable sense of reverent adoration for the beauty of Nature and

for the greatness of the divine wisdom which created it. This is the leading *motif* in the music of all these panels. It is repeated again and again in different keys and in different chords, every note and every phrase joining to make one great harmonious sequence of praise and thankfulness.

The two panels in the next illustration show the same superlative sense of beauty and power of grouping figures together to express varying feeling and emotions. The upper one represents Mâya, the mother of Buddha, seated on her car of state and hastening to the Lumbini Garden, where, as she has learnt in a dream, her son who was to be the salvation of the world, should be born. The male attendants surround the car in zealous care of their royal mistress, clearing the path in front of any untoward or unseemly thing, and holding the insignia of royalty proudly over her, while the ladies in her train follow behind in lively converse on the coming event. The feelings of queenly and womanly dignity in Mâya and the eager expectancy in the throng of her attendants, are perfectly given.

In the panel below either Mâya or the wife of Prince Siddhartha is engaged in paying her devotions at the temple. The grouping and the various attitudes of her attendants waiting outside the temple are as full of intense and subtle sentiment as any of the series. In none of these scenes is there any set form or mannerism in the grouping, such as we often observe in Ghiberti's

PLATE XXXVII



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

art and in the composition of many of the best Italian masters. These Bôrôbudûr sculptors have known how to convey the essence of truth as it is found in Nature without obtruding their own personality or relying on any of the common tricks of their craft. Their art, used only in the service of truth and religion, has made their hands the obedient tools of a heaven-sent inspiration; and their unique power of realising this, with a depth and sincerity unsurpassed in the art of any land, or in any epoch, gives them a right to rank among the greatest of the symbolists in the whole history of art.

The last of the illustrations I have selected to show the art of Bôrôbudûr is one of a series which represents scenes in the Tusitâ heavens, where, according to the Mahâyâna doctrine, all Bodhisattvas are born before they appear in the world, and where Maitreya, the coming Buddha, now lives.

Here also the Buddha, Gautama, having finished his incarnations on earth and accomplished his Nirvana, is said to have gone to teach and convert his mother Mâya,[1] who died a week after his birth. This is the scene represented in the panel. Buddha, enthroned in all the glory of his divinity under a splendid canopy, is preaching the law to Mâya, who sits in happy ecstasy listening to the inspired words of her son.

The two symbolic trees, magnificently conven-

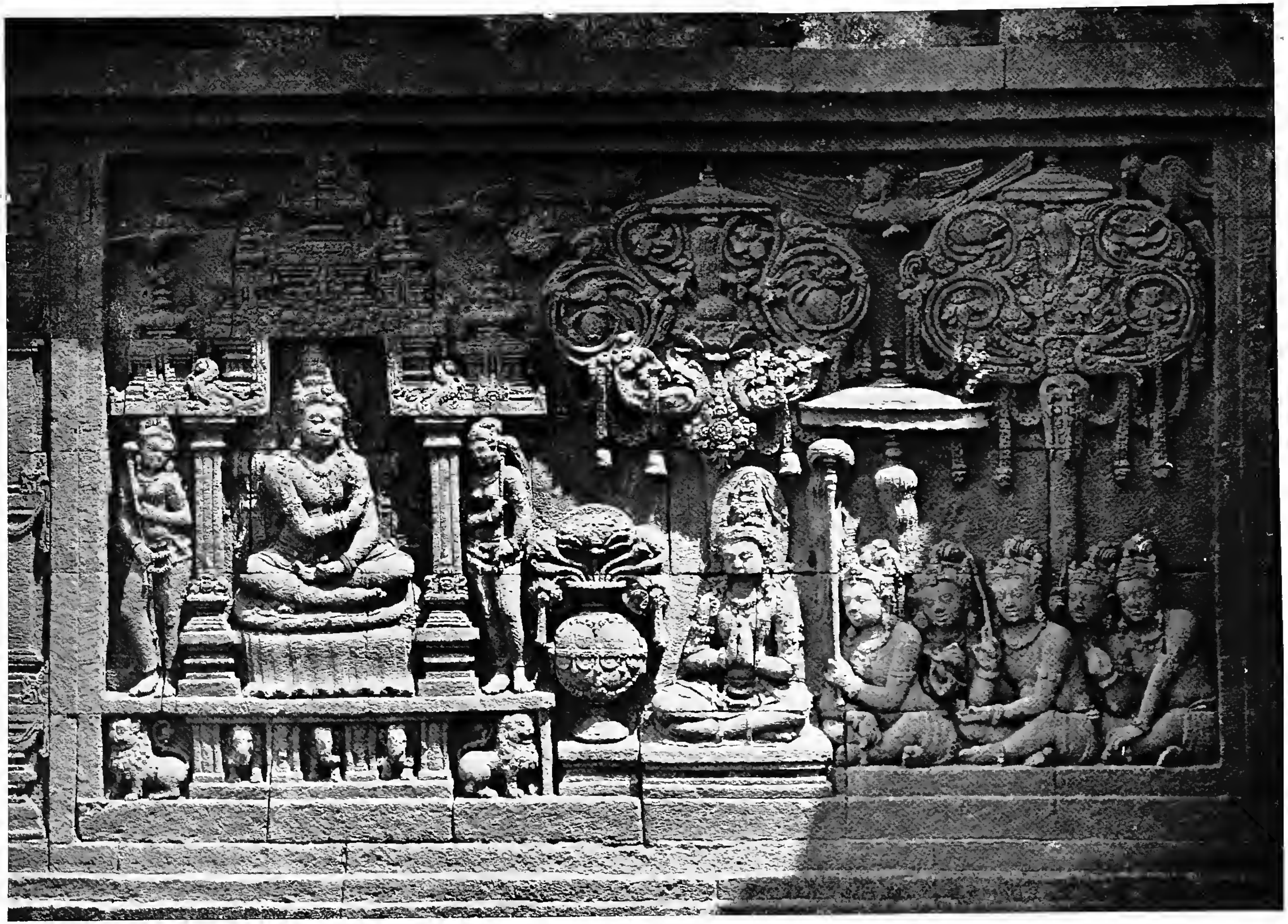
[1] Grünwedel, "Buddhist Art in India," p. 132.

tionalised, the doves and sacred birds which hover overhead, contribute greatly to the richness of the decorative effect, but the rare genius of the artist is most conspicuous in the delightful group of Mâya's five attendants, leaning forward as far as respect for their royal mistress will permit, and straining their ears so that no word of the Divine Truth may escape them.

The fact that these marvellous sculptures have hitherto attracted so little attention goes far to show that the reputation of works of art in Europe depends more upon the label attached to them by the pedantic tradition of our so-called classical education than upon their intrinsic merit.

An amusing incident illustrating the extreme importance of labels in the minds of European art-experts occurred recently. A bronze statuette attributed to an Italian master of the sixteenth century was purchased by one of the great European art museums. It was duly labelled, discussed, and admired as a great work of art, until one fine day a living sculptor walked into the museum and claimed it as his own work. When the truth of his claim was established, the consternation of the museum authorities was great. The poor innocent statuette, which under the name attributed to it was bought for some thousands of pounds, was not worth twenty as the work of a living artist: it was promptly hustled into a store-room as unfit for public view. To the lay mind it must seem incomprehensible

PLATE XXXVIII



RELIEF AT BÔRÔBUDÛR

why a copy or adaptation of Greek or Græco-Roman work by an Italian of the sixteenth century should be invaluable for the art-education of the people, when a similar thing done equally well by Brown or Robinson in the twentieth century is considered worthless.

But it can hardly be doubted that had these Bôrôbudûr sculptures only been labelled "Greek," "Roman," or "Italian," the volumes of criticism and commentaries upon them would have filled many libraries; casts of them would be found in every European art-school and museum; tourists would have flocked to inscribe their names upon them or chip off fragments as souvenirs; art-dealers and American millionaires would have jostled one another in their eagerness to possess them. But as they are only Indo-Javanese and memorials of Asiatic culture, they are as works of art totally unappreciated, though well known to oriental archæologists; and Bôrôbudûr remains an obscure and neglected ruin, the name of which is hardly mentioned either in Europe or in Asia. I believe there does not even yet exist a complete photographic record of the sculptures, the series taken by Mr. Van Kinsbergen in 1872, of which only six sets were printed and buried in the libraries of six learned societies, representing only a small part of them.

And while there is no living artist within the boundaries of Europe who can produce anything, either in painting or in sculpture, to be placed

side by side with these wonderful reliefs, and while the living traditions of this great art still linger in several parts of India, we establish schools to teach Indians painting and sculpture as they are taught in Europe, send out sculptors to decorate Indian buildings, and flatter ourselves that by the annual fine art exhibitions which amuse Anglo-Indian *dilettanti* we are helping to elevate the taste of the Indian public!

Europe of the present day has in art far more to learn from India than to teach. Religious art in Europe is altogether lost; it perished in our so-called Renaissance. In India the true spirit of it still lives.

The study of these sculptures of Bôrôbudûr is a liberal art-education in itself. Is it too much to hope, when at some future time a reasonable and intelligent artistic policy is established in India, both as regards school of art work and general education, that reproductions of these classics of Indian art[1] may be put before Indian students instead of European casts from "the antique"; and that the libraries of every college and high school may have illustrations of them, to teach coming generations of Indians that they too have an art for which they should feel proud and reverently thankful, despised and neglected though it may be in the ignorance and folly of the present one?

[1] Casts of some of the finest have been taken lately by the Dutch Government, and can be obtained from the Colonial Museum, Haarlem.

Quite apart from its purely artistic aspects there is in an art like this an ethical value which modern India seems unable to understand and utilise. It is just in this ethical principle that modern education on classical lines misconstrues the spirit of classical culture and art. Every national art is an expression of national character, and when we compare the devout and reverent outlook upon Nature shown in these Bôrôbudûr sculptures with the utter vulgarity of modern India, as we have made it, it is only too evident that in one respect our education falls immeasurably behind that of Greece and of ancient India, in the neglect of Plato's injunction "to use the beauties of earth as steps along which we mount upwards."

India, vulgarised by modern education and by the sordid ideals of modern commercialism, will never compensate humanity for India with its knowledge of beauty—the perfect law of Nature, in which science and art are one.

CHAPTER VII

HINDU ART IN JAVA AND KAMBODIA—PORTRAITURE

The Bôrôbudûr sculptures are in some respects unique, both in the perfection of their art and in the good fortune which has preserved them from wanton destruction. The obscurity into which the great monument has fallen has been, perhaps, its best protection, and saved it from the fate of so many other masterpieces of Indian art. No fanatics, either European or native, have laid sacrilegious hands upon it; no enterprising builders have made use of it for a quarry, or converted its stones into lime; no railway contractors or energetic public works officers have broken its splendid sculptures for ballast or for road-mending. What it has suffered has been from natural causes, the destructive influences of the tropical climate, from earthquake or from mere neglect.

Just as it happened in India itself, when Buddhism was supplanted by Brahmanism as the state religion, the traditions of Buddhist art were carried on in the same way by orthodox Hindus in Java. It seems, indeed, as if all that is best in

PLATE XXXIX



RELIEF AT PRAMBÂNAM

Hindu art, both in painting and in sculpture, is a direct inheritance from Buddhism. This at least is evident in the Hindu sculptures of the temples at Prambanam, the ancient capital of the island.

From Buddhism the Hindus borrowed the custom of using the courtyards or the walls of the sacred shrines which the pilgrims or worshippers perambulated as national painting and sculpture galleries. The courtyard of one of the temples dedicated to Vishnu at Prambanam is decorated with a remarkable series of sculptures illustrating the great Hindu epic, the Râmâyana. Two of the finest passages taken from Dr. J. Groneman's work are given in Plates XXXIX. and XL. The date of the sculptures is supposed to be about the eleventh century.

The style of these Prambanam sculptures often lacks the splendid simplicity and restraint of those of Bôrôbudûr. The extravagant fables of the exploits of Râma's monkey allies are told almost in the spirit of burlesque, and the imagination of the sculptors sometimes runs wild in trying to depict the horrors of the trackless jungles and their demon inhabitants. Nevertheless there are many striking passages showing splendid power of composition and an exquisite technique.

Plate XXXIX. is the first of the series, and illustrates the beginning of the Râmâyana legend which tells how Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya, being childless, obtains from Vishnu by the aid of sacrifices a divine elixir, through drinking

which his three wives conceive and bear him four godlike sons, Râma, Lakshman, Satrughna, and Bharat.

On the left of the illustration the god Vishnu, whose head is unfortunately mutilated, reclines on the great serpent Ananta, symbolising Eternity, which floats upon the waters, here represented as teeming with varied forms of marine life. The grotesque figure on Vishnu's right with a bird's beak and claws is Garuda, the deity's *vahan* or vehicle.

The charming group of human figures on Vishnu's left is supposed by Dr. Groneman to represent Dasaratha, surrounded by his barren wives, receiving from Vishnu the magic potion. If this is a correct interpretation, the Javanese version of the legend must give Dasaratha four wives instead of three. But the bearded figure taken by Dr. Groneman for Dasaratha seems more like one of the Hindu *rishis* who are shown in other scenes in these sculptures. Possibly then this group really represents Râma and his three brothers being brought to the presence of the deity by Vashishtha, or Vishwamitra, the great *rishis* who were Dasaratha's counsellors and spiritual advisers.

The rest of this panel appears to represent a scene in the court of Dasaratha; but though it is well composed and executed with great refinement and skill, it is difficult to determine the exact incident of the story which is intended, especially

PLATE XL



RELIEF AT PRAMBÂNAM

as the head of one of the principal figures is broken.

The next Plate, XL., shows Râma and his devoted brother Lakshman in their forest retreat, after the fatal decree of banishment, obtained by the youngest queen's jealous intrigue, had driven them from the court of Ayodhya. The weird but amiable figure in the cave or hut on the left is apparently one of the friendly hermits who afforded them shelter in the jungle.

The subject of the two slabs on the right seems to be the first meeting of Râma with the vulture-king, Jatayau, who warned him of the demons of the forest and their vile enchantments, and of the perils which beset Râma's wife, the lovely Sîtâ, when the brothers went hunting.

Dr. Groneman says of some of the Prambanam sculptures that they approach near to Greek art in truth and beauty, and are far above what he has seen in other Hindu temples in Java, Ceylon, or India. Sir Stamford Raffles, the British governor of Java from 1811 to 1816, says of Prambanam: "In the whole course of my life I have never met with such stupendous and finished specimens of human labour, and of the science and taste of 'ages long since forgot,' crowded together in so small a compass as in this little spot."[1] But the material for enabling those who have not visited the island to appreciate these splendid sculptures is at present very scanty. Java affords an almost

[1] "History of Java," vol. ii., p. 15.

unlimited field for artistic research. To describe adequately the sculptures of Bôrôbudûr and Prambanam would require many volumes, and my present purpose is fulfilled with the illustrations already given.[1]

I can only make a brief passing allusion to a remarkable series of sculptures which adorn another great monument of Indian art—the temple of Nakhon Vat, near Ankhor in Kambodia, a corner of the Far East which bears witness to the maritime enterprise of Indian races in former times.

About the fourth century A.D., a band of adventurers from the country round Takshasîla, called then Kamboja, seems to have set off from the west coast of India, as the colonists of Java did a few centuries later, and eventually founded a kingdom in the south-eastern corner of Asia, which they named after their native country.

They carried with them the art-traditions of the Kashmir school; and in the centuries which followed, down to the fourteenth, when the kingdom was annexed to that of Siam, their descendants built a series of temples which, according to Fergusson, are "as large and as richly ornamented as any to be found in any part of the world."

One of the last of these, the temple of Nakhon Vat above mentioned, is a vast structure exceeding Bôrôbudûr in dimensions—the outer walled en-

[1] Mr. E. A. von Saher's "De Versierende Kunsten in Nederlandsch Oost Indie" contains a fine series of illustrations of sculpture from Bôrôbudûr and Prambanam.

closure of it measuring two-thirds of a mile on each of the four sides. We are not, however, concerned with the magnificence of the architecture, the details of which are given by Fergusson, but with the sculptures illustrating the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata which decorate the walls of the temple. They are in very low relief, as they were not, like the Bôrôbudûr sculptures, intended for an open-air light, but for the reflected light of the magnificent colonnades under shelter of which they are placed. The whole of them, about six and a half feet in height and of an aggregate length of about two thousand feet, were originally gilt.

Casts of these fine sculptures are in the Ethnographic Museum at Berlin, but from want of space they are not displayed to great advantage there. The most striking subject is the well-known Indian legend, told in the Râmâyana, of the churning of the ocean by the gods and *asuras* in order to procure *amrita*, the nectar of immortality. This is treated with immense imaginative power and sense of movement, but the sculptures as a rule do not possess the peculiar charm of Bôrôbudûr.

Most of the other subjects are battle-scenes from the Mahâbhârata, which are described with extreme elaboration and wonderful vigour. In the treatment of the human figure these Kambodian reliefs are strongly suggestive of the Amarâvati sculptures, and retain much of the mannerisms of this school, which was also derived originally from Kashmir.

There are many other sculptured monuments in India itself, especially those in Southern India and in Orissa, which deserve more than a passing notice; but in most of these the sculptures are intended more for architectural embellishment than for a didactic purpose, and hardly come within my present scope. The types already given illustrate the best that Indian sculptors have produced in the province of "fine art," as distinguished from architectural decoration.

We have now only to discuss the question of portraiture in Indian sculpture. From numerous references to Sanskrit literature it appears that painted portraiture was quite common in India in pre-Mogul times, but allusions to sculptured portraits, as distinguished from images of the gods, are rare.

There are several in the Râmâyana; one in which Râma had an image made of Sîtâ. This was, however, only to meet the dilemma in which he was placed when, after Sîtâ was exiled, he was advised to perform the great Horse-sacrifice, a ceremony which demanded the presence of his co-partner in religious rites, his wife. Râma had the golden image of his Queen made for the occasion, and it was carried in front of the procession by his brother Bharat (*Uttara Kanda*, 25).

In two other instances Râma's demon adversaries had lifelike portraits made, but the context clearly shows that this branch of sculpture was considered to belong to the black rather than to the fine arts. The first was when Ravana wanted to beguile his

unhappy captive Sîtâ into believing that Râma was dead. He ordered a skilful craftsman to make a lifelike model of Râma's head, which was brought in to Sîtâ, who, "seeing the severed head, and finding in the complexion of the face, in the eyes, in the hair, and in the jewelled knot, a likeness to her husband, and recognising it by all these signs and marks, became exceeding sad, and crying like a *kurari*, denounced Kaikeyi bitterly" (*Lanka Kanda*, chap. 32).

In the same book, chapter 81, Indrajit, the son of Ravana, had an image made of Sîtâ, and, bringing it on his chariot in front of the contending armies, cut it down with his sword. The trick was so successful that even the astute Hanuman, Râma's faithful ally, was deceived, and brought to Râma the sad news of Sîtâ's death.

The word used in the text for a likeness—*Maya*, illusion or deception—is significant of the orthodox Hindu attitude towards portraiture. It was the whole object of Hindu endeavour to get rid of *Maya*, the illusive appearance of things, and to penetrate to the eternal Reality which stood behind it. For the artist to occupy himself with a simple imitation of nature was idle and impious. His aim must be to show the Divinity, which is the only reality. By the Hindu *Sastras*, as well as by the law of Islam, statues of human beings, as such, are distinctly forbidden. In the "Sukranitisara," already alluded to, it is said: "Only the

[1] See note, p. 54.

images of gods should be made, for they confer heaven and happiness; but the images of men and others shut the door of heaven and bring ill-fortune." And again: "A misshapen image of God is always better than an image of man, however well-made the latter may be." [1]

This sufficiently explains why on old Indian coins we rarely find effigies of Hindu rulers. It also explains why in Hindu sculpture the tendency has always been to make representations of human beings, even when intended as portraiture, to conform to the ideal type of Divinity. It was impious to glorify man in his common personality, but not so to explain him as one of the manifestations of the universal, divine nature. Europe says: "The noblest study of mankind is man;" India declares it to be not man, but God, and Hindu art is only concerned in showing the relationship between the human and the divine nature.

In the Buddhist period, however, this prejudice

[1] The same work after the most minute instructions as to the correct proportions of images, from the total height down to the circumference of the thumb and great toe, adds the following explanations: "In order that the form of an image may be brought out fully and clearly upon the mind, the image-maker must meditate, and his success will be in proportion to his meditation. No other way, not even seeing the object itself, will answer this purpose.

"To every part of the image should be given that grace and ease which is most suitable for it . . . an image with a wrathful look should not have complacent eyes. Those images are handsome, the measurements of which are in accordance with the rules in the Sastras. Some, however, are of opinion that what pleases the heart is beautiful. But the measurements that do not agree with those given in the Sastras cannot be pleasing to the cultured."

against portraiture was not so strong, and at Bharhut and Sanchi there are sculptures of semi-divine beings showing a clearly-marked individuality, suggestive of true portraiture. One from Bharhut is illustrated in Plate XXVIII. Among the later Gandharan sculptures in the Lahore Museum and elsewhere, there are many strikingly characteristic heads which are so markedly individual that they are taken by some archæologists to represent portraits of the Gandharan kings; but others consider them to be intended for Bodhisattvas, or for guardian demi-gods.

The early Indian coinage also shows the most obvious portraiture;[1] but this is pure Græco-Roman art, untouched by Indian influence. Evidently Græco-Roman artisans at one time had almost a monopoly of some of the mints of Northern India; and this was, perhaps, the only craft in which Indians of that time were inferior to foreigners.

When the canons of Indian art were finally fixed as part of a religious ritual, portraiture as a distinct branch of sculpture seems to have become almost extinct. In images of the gods the whole aim was to suggest a type of face as far as possible impersonal—that is, to suppress all the details indicative of human individuality, instead of creating a type of ideal human beauty, as in Greek art. But there is a great deal of Indian sculpture, especially in Java, in which a distinct ethnical

[1] See frontispiece to Vincent Smith's "Early History of India."

type is taken for the head of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, or Hindu demi-god, just as in the mediæval art of Europe royal personages and dignitaries of the Church suggested the types of Christian saints.

In this, what we may call uncanonical Indian sculpture, we can find types of physiognomy and character given with the highest art, and with as much variety and power of expression as Greek sculpture can show, though it is not, strictly speaking, portraiture. Here Indian art comes almost in the same plane of thought as Western, and we fairly draw a comparison between them. That Indian sculptors did not attempt to portray violent emotions and facial expression in the same way as Europeans must again be attributed to a difference of temperament and difference of thought, not to want of capacity. Their religion taught them that the way to spiritual advancement was by controlling human passions, and this teaching strongly influenced their art. But the common idea that Indian sculpture is lacking in power of expression is just as wrong as other uninformed opinions on Indian art. The best Indian sculpture touched a deeper note of feeling and finer sentiments than the best Greek.

Two ethnical types of extraordinary beauty and character are given in Plates XLI. and XLII. The first two represent Bhima, one of the great heroes of the Mahâbhârata, famous for his strength and courage. They are taken from a temple dedi-

PLATE XLI





TWO HEADS OF BHIMA

cated to him on the plateau of Diëng, Central Java. The other is Buddha himself, also from Java.

At first sight the suggestion they give of ancient Egyptian or Greek art is almost startling. There is the greatness of line, splendid generalisation, and profound abstraction of the best Egyptian sculpture, and all the refinement of Greek art. But the similarity comes only from the kinship which exists between all truly great works of art, for these types are wholly Indian.

The contrast of the two characters is given with a depth of penetration which belongs only to the grandest portraiture. In Bhima's head the artist, with a few bold, clearly drawn forms, shows us the born fighter and leader of men. In the large, square forehead, the full, firm jaw, the eyes set wide apart, and the determined mouth—half-savage, even cruel when his blood is roused—we recognise a young Alexander, a fighter who knows his own strength and revels in it. All his desires and aims are human, yet there is nothing low or brutal in his nature. He is a great national hero, a war-lord fit to lead and command a noble, free-born race.

Compare this with the head of the Buddha, Sakya-muni. There is an infinity of difference in the type, yet the art is the same in its greatness and its inwardness. It is a true portrait-type of high-bred, intellectual Indian, but all that is pure, spiritual, and holy in Indian thought and religion is summed up in this supremely lovely face. The perfect oval shape, the small, refined chin, and the

finely chiselled features, speak of the god-like man who chose to leave all that was his—a royal throne, wealth, and earthly happiness—only to find the Way to help his suffering fellow-men.

The nobly vaulted brow and exquisitely formed eyes, with half-fallen meditative lids, tell us of infinite spiritual strength. A touch of sadness seems to rest on the full and tender lips, yet we can almost see them wreathed with a consoling, loving smile, and hear them utter words of blessing and perfect peace.

Compare it, if you will, with its assumed Gandharan prototype, or with the Grecian models which Gandhara had in its mind; but there is in this art a depth and spirituality which never entered into the soul of Greece.

The method of treating the hair in formal curls which is characteristic of the Indian ideal of Buddha has given rise to much archæological speculation and condemnation. The general archæological conclusion, founded on the assumption of Indian artistic incapacity and bad taste, has been that Indian sculptors found the Grecian treatment, which is generally adopted in the Gandharan sculptures, too difficult to imitate, and that in consequence they fell back upon this, which Mr. Vincent Smith calls "the feeble conventionalism of ordinary Indian art." [1]

If we adopt the alternative hypothesis, that Indian artists possessed quite as much artistic

[1] "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," vol. lviii., 1889, p. 128.

PLATE XLII



A HEAD OF BUDDHA

sense as others, the explanation is not very far to seek. In endeavouring to differentiate divine beauty from that of mortals they looked for those characteristics which are uncommon in human beings. To this day anything rare or abnormal is popularly regarded in India as a special manifestation of the divine nature. Among Indians of the highest castes, descended from the pure Aryan stock, short curly hair is unusual, and held as a sign of special distinction or good fortune. Naturally enough, it was adopted by Indian artists as one of the marks of divine beauty.

The formalism is only another Indian method of showing that the divine nature transcends that of common humanity. And when this conventionalism is thoroughly well carried out, and is a true expression of Indian thought, there is no justification for calling it "inartistic," or "depraved," except in the minds of those who are convinced beyond argument that there is nothing admirable in any art the ideals of which differ from those of Greece and Italy.

Java is so rich in beautiful types of Indian sculpture of this class that volumes again might be filled with them. But we must now return to India, the fountain-head, where the traditions of it are not yet entirely extinct, though the art of Bôrôbudûr and Prambanam was practically extirpated in Java by the conversion of the islanders to Islam about the fifteenth century.

The next illustration, one of the grandest ex-

amples of Indian sculpture extant, not only shows the versatility of Indian sculptors in the past, but points to one of the many potential opportunities which might be opened to their descendants in the present day, if Anglo-Indians, who persist in treating them as ignorant children, possessed the capacity of the Mogul craftsmen for understanding and utilising the extraordinary artistic resources of the land in which they live. For certainly, among all the commonplace statues of British Viceroys and Generals by European artists set up on the *maidans* of Calcutta and Bombay, there is not one to be placed in the same category as this. It would be as easy for us as it was for the Moguls if we, like them, had brought with us into India craftsmen practising a living tradition of art. But as our own national craftsmanship has been practically extirpated, we have only brought the bookman, the paper architect, and the eclectic or amateur artist, who find little beauty in Indian art and can do nothing with it but debase it.

Again the thought occurs that, had it by chance been labelled "Roman," or "Greek," this magnificent work of art would now be the pride of some great metropolitan museum in Europe or America. It is one of two colossal war-horses placed outside the southern façade of the so-called Black Pagoda at Kanârak, in Orissa, a temple dedicated to Surya, the Sun-god, which is said to have been built by Narasimha I., about the middle of the thirteenth century.

PLATE XLIII



HORSE AND FIGURE AT KANÂRAK

The companion statue is completely mutilated, but this one, apart from the broken ears of the horse and the missing head of the figure which leads it, is comparatively intact, or was so not many years ago. Its surface has, however, suffered considerably from the weather, and from its exposed position it is likely to suffer still more if it is not adequately protected.

Visions of the Mahâbhârata, the clash of battle in heroic ages, and memories of the past triumphs of Indian chivalry must have inspired the sculptor of this noble figure and his prancing, war-harnessed steed, pacing grandly forward over their prostrate foes.

Here Indian sculptors have shown that they can express with as much fire and passion as the greatest European art the pride of victory and the glory of triumphant warfare; for not even the Homeric grandeur of the Elgin marbles surpasses the magnificent movement and modelling of this Indian Achilles, and the superbly monumental war-horse in its massive strength and vigour is not unworthy of comparison with Verocchio's famous masterpiece at Venice.

The art we see here is not the less great because it is not necessary to be a veterinary surgeon to see that there is a great deal in equine anatomy which this unknown sculptor has not cared to emphasise. As he had no modern *dilettante* critic to satisfy, he was free to make his statement of facts as simple and general as his artistic con-

sciousness dictated, and to strike a note of epic grandeur hardly ever heard in any modern art.

The next illustration, Plate XLIV., is of a very different type, and belongs to another school. It is a copper-gilt statuette from Nepal, now in the Calcutta Art Gallery, representing a demi-god, probably Kuvera, the god of worldly prosperity. Divested of his divine attributes, the crown and two supplementary arms, it is a most vivid and speaking portrait of a well-fed, self-indulgent Lama or Brahmin priest, fond of good living and of all things which make life pleasant and comfortable.

The contrast between this very mundane deity and the idealised spiritual type we have seen before is very striking. Here the artist has only wanted to show the human body without the divine soul, and in this wonderfully animated and strongly modelled figure it is evident that he is as capable of doing this as any European sculptor.

It is thoroughly modern and European in all its sentiment. There are no dreams, no religious ecstasy, no high spiritual ideals. It is a personification of materialism and of the worldly life. The movement of the fingers speaks of prayer, but the prayers are for worldly, not spiritual benefits. The coarse, strong features and very lively expression of the face indicate sensuality and intellectual power of a low, self-seeking kind, combined with an infinite capacity for the enjoyment of the pleasures of life. The body, well-fed and

PLATE XLIV



KUVERA
(From Nepal)

rounded in every limb, makes it clear that hard work or abstinence is not part of the gospel which he preaches.

European artists who have neither the time nor the inclination to study Eastern art commonly assert that the oriental can neither draw nor model the human figure correctly. The criticism is as superficial as it is unjust. The Eastern artist, like the Western, draws what he wants to draw and models what he wants to model, and the failure of the European to appreciate oriental draughtsmanship comes either from his inability, or from his unwillingness, to understand the intention of it.

I will conclude this brief study of Indian portrait sculpture with another example of the modern Nepalese school, a copper-gilt statuette of a Tibetan nun or abbess, holding the usual sacerdotal drum, made of human skulls, in the right hand, and a beggar's bowl in the left. The original, like the last example, is in the Calcutta Art Gallery.

This is another delightfully conceived and admirably executed portrait study of an ordinary human being. The real type the artist knew was, perhaps, a frowsy, unkempt, ugly and awkward Tibetan woman, mumbling an empty formula, with a dull, monotonous drum-beat as accompaniment. But guided unconsciously by his inherited art-traditions, and without any desire to flatter or idealise, he has succeeded in expressing, in the

whole attitude and in the treatment of the dress and all the accessories, that style and dignity which national feeling and respect for the spiritual calling of his subject demanded, even though individuals should be found unworthy of them.

In all these portrait types, reflecting so sincerely and truthfully the soul of the people, we can feel the different outlook of a great national artistic tradition, and that of the petty individualistic art of modern Europe, with all its narrowness, self-consciousness, and provincialism.

"Whole æras," said Ruskin, "of mighty history are summed and the passions of dead myriads are concentrated in the existence of a noble (national) art; and if that art were among us we should feel it and rejoice."

We Europeans who live in India to-day have such an art still living amongst us; but the history is not our history, and the passions of those dead myriads do not move us. So we neither feel it nor rejoice, but rather trample it heedlessly under our feet.

PLATE XLV



A TIBETAN NUN

PART II

PAINTING

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

IT will be easily understood that, owing partly to the destructive influences of a tropical climate acting on materials ordinarily much less durable than stone or metal, and partly to the greater facilities which they offer to the destructive propensities of the vandal and Philistine, the existing records of pictorial art are much fewer than those of sculpture. As the motives and ideals of Indian religious art have been explained more or less fully in the chapters relating to sculpture, I shall not attempt to cover the whole of the same ground in painting, but confine myself chiefly to the secular art of the Mogul period. The Calcutta Art Gallery now possesses one of the finest collections of this remarkable school, and, owing to the facilities kindly afforded me by the Bengal Government, I am enabled to give reproductions of some of the masterpieces of the best Mogul artists.

One of the oldest pictorial processes in India, as in Egypt, was fresco-painting, *i.e.* painting on

a prepared surface of lime spread on a wall of wood, brick, or stone. The true process of fresco-painting—the *fresco buono*, as it is called in Italy, in which the painting is begun and finished piece by piece on a section of a wall (kept continually moist so that the colours are chemically united with the ground)—seems to have been practised in India from very early times, but tempera painting was more common, as it still is in the present day.

Indian *fresco buono*, when the wall is a suitable one, is an exceedingly permanent process for interior decoration, and much more durable in a tropical climate than oil-painting. But as it was largely used in exposed situations, or in buildings which were not themselves of a permanent nature, very few of the early Indian fresco-paintings have survived except those in the Ajanta cave-temples, the earliest of which are said to date from the second or first centuries before Christ, and a few similar ones in Ceylon.

Buried in the dry sands of Egypt, which are a wonderful preservative of antiquities, fresco-paintings have retained their freshness intact for many thousands of years. No paintings have yet been recovered from Indian deserts, but in recent years the ancient sand-buried cities of Turkestan have given up numerous fresco-paintings of extra-ordinary interest and almost as perfect in colour as when they were painted. These tell us a great deal of the pictorial art of the Indian Buddhist monasteries in the early centuries of the Christian

era, and of its progress eastwards into China and Japan.[1] The description and illustration of them must, however, be left to their fortunate discoverers, Dr. von Lecoq, Professor Grünwedel, and Dr. Stein.

Hiuen Thsang, the Buddhist pilgrim from China who visited India in the seventh century, says that artists from Baktria were employed to paint the Buddhist monasteries during the time of Kanishka, King of Gandhara, about the first century of our era, and that the convent of Serika was famous for its mural paintings. But we must not conclude from this that the traditions of Indian painting were entirely foreign products. The universities of ancient India, like those of Taksashila, near the modern Peshawur, Nalanda in Bengal, and Sridhanya Kataka on the banks of the Krishna, comprised schools of religious painting and sculpture; and in these great culture-centres of India all foreign artistic ideas were gradually transformed by Indian thought, and nationalised.

From them, also, the Indian art thus created radiated all over Asia in the great epoch dating from about the first century B.C. down to about the eighth century. No doubt it was to these schools that India owed the paintings of Ajanta as well as the sculptures of Amarâvati, Ellora, and Elephanta.

[1] The most important of these are now in the Ethnographical Museum, Berlin.

The early Buddhist records contain many allusions to "picture halls," which were no doubt the halls of monasteries painted with sacred subjects, like those of the sculpture galleries already described; or paintings on the walls of garden quadrangles, protected by verandahs, such as are commonly attached to royal palaces and private dwellings in Northern India. These were used as picture galleries even in recent times, before Indian art fell into utter disrepute, and it became fashionable among Indian princes to import inferior European oil-paintings and English furniture.

There are many allusions in Sanskrit literature to these picture galleries. For instance, in the description of Ravana's palace in Ceylon given in the Râmâyana:

> Gay, blooming creepers clothed the walls,
> Green bowers were there and picture-halls,
> And chambers made for soft delight.[1]

But the most detailed and interesting description of these painted quadrangles is given by Bhabhabhuti, a celebrated Indian dramatist of the sixth century, in his *Uttara Rama Charita*, which is translated by Wilson. Here a whole scene in the first act is devoted to an animated description of a series of pictures illustrating the Râmâyana, painted on the walls of a quadrangle in the garden of Râma's palace at Ayodhya, just as we have seen such scenes sculptured in the quadrangle of the temple of Vishnu at Prambanam.

[1] "Sunda Kanda," Griffith's translation, Book V., canto vi., p. 297.

The *dramatis personæ* are Râma, King of Ayodhya, Sîtâ, his Queen, and Lakshman, his brother and faithful companion in exile.

Lakshman thus invites Râma to come and look at the paintings:

> Come, my most noble brother, on these walls
> Behold a skilful artist has portrayed
> Your story as he learnt it late from me.

The next scene, called "the contemplation of the picture," is laid in a pavilion in the garden of the palace. The walls on which the pictures were painted were those which enclosed the garden and pavilion.

Enter LAKSHMANA, SÎTÂ, *and* RÂMA.

> LAKS. Behold the picture.
> SÎTÂ. What are these that crowd
> Around my lord, and seem to hymn his praises?
> LAKS. These are the heavenly arms,[1] that Vishwamitra,
> The holy sage from Kusa sprung, the friend
> Of all mankind, obtained from great Krisawa,
> And gave them to the prince to wage the fight
> With that malignant demon Taraka.

The next panel of the painting showed Râma when as a youth he competed for the hand of Sîtâ at the court of her father, Janaka, King of Videha, breaking the famous bow of Siva, which no other suitor had been able to bend.

[1] The arms with which Râma fought against his demon adversaries are represented as animated beings sent by the gods.

Sîtâ herself describes the picture :

> Yes, I see my lord.
> Dark as the deep blue lotus is his hue,
> And strength and grace in every limb appear.
> Paternal looks dwell wondering on his face,
> Lovely with graceful curls, whilst high disdain
> Swells every feature, as with force divine
> He snaps asunder the celestial bow.

The carved panel at Bôrôbudûr with the analogous Buddhist story of Prince Siddhartha and the bow of Sinhahânu (Plate XXXIV.) will give us a suggestion of this one.

The next panel depicted the marriage of Râma and his three brothers with Sîtâ, her sister and cousins :

> SÎTÂ. A solemn scene, where gifts of kine secure
> Auspicious destiny, and four bright youths
> Are knit in marriage bonds with four fair maids ;
> I recognise you all—and there, and there
> Am I.

In another part of the painting Râma recognises his bride when he brought her back to his father's palace at Ayodhya, before the cruel decree of banishment drove them to the seclusion of the forest :

> RÂMA. Ah, too well,
> Too well does memory bring back the time
> When yet an honoured sire was alive,
> Whilst yet a mother's love watched o'er our being ;
> When all was joy. Ah me, those days are gone!
> But here behold—see how the youthful bride,
> Fair Sîtâ, wins maternal admiration ;

Her smiling countenance resplendent shines
With youth and loveliness; her lips disclose
Teeth white as jasmine buds; her silky curls
Luxuriant shade her cheeks, and every limb
Of brightest texture moves with natural grace,
Like moonbeams gliding through the yielding air.

The dramatist, with rare skill, goes on to indicate the varied emotions of the royal spectators, as they review all the different incidents of their past life depicted before them—their happiness in the jungle hut on the banks of the Godavery:

RÂMA. Recall'st thou, love, our humble, happy dwelling
Upon the borders of the shining stream,
Where every hour in fond endearment wrapped,
Or in the sweet interchange of thought engaged,
We lived in transport, not a wish beyond
Each other, reckless of the flight of time?—

their encounter with the demons, the abduction of Sîtâ and the distracted grief of Râma:

LAKSHMAN: And here again,
The anguish which craft of wicked fiends
And violence inflicted is renewed,
And the rude stone and adamantine rock,
Dissolve in gentle pity, as they witness
The prince's sorrows in the lonely forest.

The devotion of the great vulture-king, Jatayau, slain by Ravana while desperately struggling to defend Sîtâ; the valour of Râma's monkey-allies, and the heroic deeds by which the demon-king's stronghold in Ceylon was at last overthrown and the rescue of Sîtâ accomplished, were all described in successive pictures.

The scene ends with Sîtâ's happy thought:

> My dearest lord, this picture has inspired
> A foolish fancy—may I give it utterance?
>   RÂMA. Fear not to speak it, love.
>   SÎTÂ. I long once more to wander through the shades
> Of the brown woods, and plunge amidst the wave
> Of Bhagirathi's cool translucent stream.

In the early Buddhist days painting would seem to have been an occupation deemed not unworthy of princes. Mr. R. C. Dutt, in his "History of Civilisation in India," gives the following incident from the Nâgânanda, a Buddhist drama attributed to the King Sîlâditya II., but probably written by his court poet:

Jîmûtavâhana, Prince of the Vidyâdharas, finds Malayâvatî, Princess of the Siddhas, engaged in the worship of the Hindu goddess Gauri and falls in love with her. He appears before her just as Dushyanta appeared before Sakuntala, and the maiden reciprocates his passion.

Jîmûtavâhana wiles away his time by drawing a portrait of Malayâvatî. He asks for a piece of red arsenic to draw it with, and his companion picks up from the ground pieces of clay or stone of five different colours—blue, yellow, red, brown, and grey. Malayâvatî watches the Prince as he draws, but her lover is far from successful in his portrait, for, thinking it to be intended for some other love of the Prince, she faints away in a fit of jealousy.

From numerous other references to painted portraits in Sanskrit literature it would appear

that the rule against portraiture in the Hindu *Sastras* either applied only to sculpture or was not very strictly observed. But probably the prohibition was meant to apply only to the precincts of sacred buildings and not to the *chitrasâlâs*, or picture galleries, attached to royal palaces or to the villas of the court noblemen.

In a play attributed to Kâlidâsa the heroine is the Queen Dhârinî's beautiful attendant named Mâlavikâ, who is a skilful musician and dancer. The Queen carefully kept her attractive handmaid from the presence of her royal husband, Agnimitra, but foolishly caused Mâlavikâ's portrait to be painted in the *chitrasâla* of the palace. The plot of this play, called *Mâlavikâgnimitra*, discloses the disastrous consequences of the King's next visit to the picture gallery.[1]

In Kâlidâsa's famous play, *Sakuntala*, a considerable part of Act VI. is taken up with a painted portrait of the Queen, with which the king Dushyanta, half demented with grief and remorse for his desertion of Sakuntala, attempts to console himself. In the text translated by Sir William Jones, this portrait is represented as painted by a lady of the Court, but the more recent version of Sir M. Monier-Williams makes the king himself the artist.

The picture represented Sakuntala and her two attendants in the garden of the hermitage where Dushyanta first saw them. Sakuntala herself is

[1] R. C. Dutt's "History of Civilisation in India," vol. ii., p. 307.

leaning "apparently a little tired, against the stem of a mango-tree, the tender leaves of which glitter with the water she has poured upon them. Her arms are gracefully extended; her face is somewhat flushed with the heat, and a few flowers have escaped from her hair, which has become unfastened and hangs in loose tresses about her neck."

The King, looking at the picture, declares that the background is only half-painted, and sends an attendant to fetch the painting implements. He will have the river Mâlinî portrayed in it:

> Its tranquil course by banks of sand impeded;
> Upon the brink a pair of swans; beyond,
> The hills adjacent to Himâlaya,
> Studded with deer; and, near the spreading shade
> Of some large tree, where 'mid the branches hang
> The hermits' vests of bark, a tender doe,
> Rubbing its downy forehead on the horn
> Of a black antelope, should be depicted.

Then he would add some ornaments to the figure of Sakuntala:

> A sweet Sirisha blossom should be twined
> Behind the ear; its perfumed crest depending
> Towards her cheek; and, resting on her bosom,
> A lotus fibre necklace, soft and bright
> As an autumnal moonbeam."

His companion, Mâthavya, notices that Sakuntala is covering her lips with one hand as if to prevent a bee, which "intent on thieving honey from the flowers seems to have mistaken her mouth for a rosebud," from settling on her lips.

This was an incident which had actually occurred at the King's first meeting with Sakuntala, as described in the first act of the play, and Dushyanta, led on by the vividness of the painting to imagine that the picture was reality, calls out:

> A bee! drive off the impudent insect, will you?

The story will recall analogous ones told of the ancient Greek artists and their skill in imitative painting. A very similar one is told of the first Chinese painter known to history, Tsao Fuh-hing, employed in the court of the Emperor Sun K'uan in the third century A.D. In this case a fly was so skilfully imitated in a painting that the Emperor himself raised his hand to brush it off.[1]

Both translators use the word "canvas" in describing the picture. Some of the ancient Central Asian paintings discovered by Dr. Von Lecoq are painted on cloth prepared with a ground of lime like modern Tibetan paintings; so it is not impossible that a canvas of this kind may have been used by Indian painters in the time of Kâlidâs. But from the Sanskrit text it would appear more probable that a wooden panel is intended.

Of this secular art of the pre-Mogul times in India there are no examples extant, but from what we know of the religious sculpture of the same period and from the remarkable technical excellence of the best paintings of the Ajanta

[1] Anderson, "Pictorial Arts of Japan."

cave-temples we can fairly assume that the merit ascribed to it by Sanskrit writers was not overrated.

The period covered by the religious paintings of Ajanta extends from about the second or first centuries before Christ to about the seventh century of our era, or over most of the great epoch of Indian art which has been reviewed in the previous chapters. Unfortunately, owing in a great measure to neglect and ill-treatment these beautiful paintings have lost all of their original charm of colour, and are so damaged otherwise as to be at present only pitiable wrecks of what they have been. A singular chapter of accidents, combined with the usual economical reasons, prevented Mr. John Griffiths from doing full justice to them in his work on Ajanta, and it is to be feared that interest in Indian art, apart from archæology, is not sufficiently strong to encourage any one to undertake the task of filling up the gaps before these almost unique records of early Indian art have entirely disappeared.

We can see in the best Ajanta paintings, especially in those of the caves numbered 16 and 17, the same intense love of nature and spiritual devotion as are evident in the sculptures of Bôrôbudûr. I must content myself with reproducing from Mr. Griffiths' work the very precious fragment of "The Mother and Child before Buddha" from Cave 17, which is quite on a level with the best art of Bôrôbudûr and in its exquisite

PLATE XLVI



MOTHER AND CHILD BEFORE BUDDHA

sentiment comparable with the wonderful Madonnas of Giovanni Bellini.

Historically the most interesting of these paintings is a large one in the first cave, representing an incident in the reign of Pulikesin II., in whose kingdom of Mahârashtra Ajanta was situated. Mr. Vincent Smith says of this painting:

"It is still easily recognisable as a vivid representation of the ceremonial attending the presentation of their credentials by the Persian envoys (from Khushru II., King of Persia, to Pulikesin, in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, A.D. 625–6). This picture, in addition to its interest as a contemporary record of unusual political relations between India and Persia, is of the highest value as a landmark in the history of art. It not only fixes the date of some of the most important paintings at Ajanta, and so establishes a standard by which the date of the others can be judged, but it also proves, or goes a long way towards proving, that the Ajanta school of pictorial art was derived directly from Persia and ultimately from Greece."[1]

In the last sentence Mr. Vincent Smith shows the unconscious bias of the European archæologist. While it is perfectly true that the influence of Persian art can be seen at Ajanta, and in a great deal of the art of Northern India, it is obvious that in this case it can only be estimated at its proper value by a comparison of Ajanta paintings with Persian paintings of the same

[1] "Early History of India," p. 325.

epoch, and not from the fact that a painting by Ajanta artists represents the reception of a Persian Embassy. The Ajanta school, according to archæologists, had been in existence for seven or eight hundred years before this particular painting was executed, a length of time which is surely sufficient to establish a right to be considered Indian. Professor Grünwedel's recent remarkable discoveries in the old Buddhist monasteries of Turkestan will no doubt throw light on the affinities of the art of Ajanta with that of Persia and Central Asia.

In an essay on the Indian Schools of Painting Mr. Vincent Smith says that "whoever seriously undertakes the critical study of the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh will find, I have no doubt, that the artists drew their inspiration from the West, and I think he will also find that their style is a local development of the cosmopolitan art of the contemporary Roman empire."[1] Here again I venture to think that Mr. Vincent Smith, like Professor Grünwedel and others, confuses the assimilation of foreign technique by Indian traditional craftsmanship with artistic inspiration. The Buddhist monastic schools of Northern India, from which the art of Ajanta was derived, were sufficiently cosmopolitan in character to account for all the foreign details which are found in these paintings, but their title to be considered Indian is just as valid as that of the schools of Athens to

[1] "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," vol. lviii., p. 177.

PLATE XLVII



FRESCO PAINTING FROM SIGIRIYA

be called Greek, those of Italy to be called Italian, and perhaps stronger than that of the schools of Oxford to be considered English.

The cosmopolitan character of these Indian philosophical schools, at the time when the foundations of Indian art were laid, was derived from the fact that they were rather schools of original research than schools of dogma and ritual. Every idea and every suggestion, whether foreign or Indian, would be weighed, considered, and, if found useful, thrown into one great crucible to form the synthesis which made up Indian philosophy, science, and art. It is a wholly misleading method of analysis to isolate details in these paintings which may be called Western and use them to prove that the inspiration of the art came from Greece or Rome. It is not the material used by an artist which shows his inspiration, but the way he uses it and the mode of his expression.

If the Ajanta paintings are placed side by side with those of Pompeii, which are true Græco-Roman art of a period not very remote from their time, all the details to which archæologists attach so much significance will assume their proper value in relation to the whole, and I venture to say that no artist would maintain that there is in these two schools any reliable evidence of being inspired by common artistic ideas, or of being formed upon common methods of artistic expression. The Ajanta paintings, as a whole, appear to be as truthful an interpretation of Indian life and thought

at the time when they were painted as the Græco-Roman paintings undoubtedly are of the life and thought of Pompeii. This must be taken as strong presumptive evidence of their artistic originality. Even assuming that Græco-Roman painters and sculptors may have sometimes been the technical teachers in Indian schools, they can no more claim on that account to have inspired Indian art than Shakespeare's schoolmistress can be said to have inspired the tragedies of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

Indian art was inspired by Indian nature, Indian philosophy and religious teaching, and no one, I imagine, would go so far as to say that all these were imported from the West. The little Greek, or Græco-Roman, art that came into India went there in the ordinary way of commercial and political intercourse, not as part of any intellectual or religious propaganda. It was assimilated by Indian art in much the same way as a great deal of oriental art became incorporated in Italian art, from the time of the building of St. Mark's at Venice down to the palmy days of the Renaissance; but we do not say that Italian art was "inspired" by the East.

When Indian art went into Ceylon, Java, Tibet, China, and the Far East, it went with Indian missionaries as part of their philosophy and religion, and so vital was the influence of Indian thought upon the art of those countries that it remains evident after the lapse of two thousand

PLATE XLVIII



FRESCO PAINTING FROM SIGIRIYA

years. India truly inspired the art of the rest of Asia, but neither at Ajanta nor anywhere else in India can the influence of Western art be called inspiration.

To form a just estimate of any national art we must consider, not what that art has borrowed, but what it has given to the world. Viewed in this light Indian art must be placed among the greatest of the great schools, either in Europe or in Asia. None of the great art-schools are entirely indigenous and self-contained, in the archæological sense; there are none which did not borrow material from other countries, and the schools of Greece and Italy are no exceptions to this rule. India was a borrower, like Greece and Italy, but what she borrowed from Persia was, so to speak, a draft on her own bank, a part of the common stock of Aryan culture. What India borrowed from outside her own world was repaid a hundred-fold by products of her own creative genius. If she took this from here, that from there, so did Greece, so did Italy; but out of what she took came higher ideals than Greece ever dreamt of, and things of beauty that Italy never realised. Let these constitute India's claim to the respect and gratitude of humanity.

A very interesting offshoot of the great Ajanta school was discovered some years ago in Ceylon, in two caves, or "pockets," excavated on the western face of the wonderful Sîgiri Rock, in the central province of the island. They belong to

the fifth century A.D. Only fragments of the paintings have survived the effects of the tropical weather to which they have been exposed for nearly 1,500 years, but these are in a much better state of preservation than those of Ajanta, which have suffered most from human destructive agencies. The two reproductions, Plates XLVII.–VIII., from the excellent copies of them by Mr. D. A. L. Perera, now in the Colombo Museum, will serve to illustrate the Botticellian grace of the parent school, though they are not equal in technique to the best work of Ajanta.

The subject of these Sîgiri paintings cannot be easily determined from the fragments which are left. Mr. H. C. P. Bell, Archæological Commissioner of Ceylon, supposes that they represent "a procession of the queens and princesses of Kâsyapa's Court, with their attendants, on their way to worship at the Buddhist *vihare* at Pidurâ-gala, the hill lying about a mile to the north of Sigiriya,"[1] but his explanation of the figures being cut short at the waist by cloud effects—that it was done to economise space—is not artistically convincing. The most that can be said is that, though apparently floating in the clouds, they appear to be human beings carrying the usual floral offerings to a Buddhist shrine. They could hardly be celestial beings, like the *vidyâdharas*, which attended on Buddhist divinities, because the principal figures are themselves attended by servants.

[1] "Journal Ceylon Branch of the R.A.S.," vol. xv., 1897–98, p. 117.

PLATE XLIX

BUDDHA-AMITÂBHA



But in Buddhist art it is common enough to find human beings depicted as taking part in worship in the heavenly spheres.

Writing on the technique of the Ajanta paintings, Mr. Griffiths, who superintended the copying of them by his students in the Bombay School of Art, says truly:

"The artists who painted them were giants in execution. Even on the vertical sides of the walls some of the lines which were drawn with one sweep of the brush struck me as being very wonderful; but when I saw long, delicate curves drawn without faltering, with equal precision, upon the horizontal surface of a ceiling, where the difficulty of execution is increased a thousand-fold, it appeared to me nothing less than miraculous. One of the students, when hoisted up on the scaffolding, tracing his first panel on the ceiling, naturally remarked that some of the work looked like child's work, little thinking that what seemed to him, up there, rough and meaningless, had been laid in with a cunning hand, so that when seen at its right distance every touch fell into its proper place."[1]

The Ajanta paintings are true frescoes, executed by a process similar to that known in Italy as *fresco buono*, though, if Mr. Griffiths is correct, they seem to have been retouched in tempera.[2] Probably Mr. Bell was led by Mr. Griffiths' early reports on this subject to suppose that the Sîgiri

[1] "Indian Antiquary," vol. iii., 1874, p. 26.
[2] "Ajanta," vol. i., p. 18.

paintings were not frescoes, in the technical sense of the word. There is no known process of tempera or oil-painting which would stand exposure to tropical weather for nearly fifteen hundred years as the Sîgiri paintings have done. The process employed, both at Ajanta and Sîgiri, was doubtless some modification of the present Indian fresco process,[1] and very similar to that used in ancient Egypt, the simplicity of which, as Mr. Griffiths observes, has ensured a durability denied to more recent attempts in Europe, executed with all the aids of modern chemical science.

The art-traditions of the old Indian Buddhist monasteries survive to this day in Nepal, Tibet, and China. A magnificent example, splendid in drawing, colour, and composition, and perfectly preserved, is a great painting now in the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin, taken from Pekin by the German military contingent in the Boxer campaign. It represents a scene in the Buddhist heavens, with a crowd of attendant saints and Lamas, nearly life-size.

The Calcutta Art Gallery possesses some remarkable examples of the painted banners which are hung in Buddhist monasteries and temples in Nepal, Tibet, and China. In Tibet they are painted by a certain class of Lamas who kept alive the Indian Buddhist art-traditions in painting as well as in wood-carving which were introduced from Nepal by the Tibetan King, Srong-tsan-

[1] See Appendix.

PLATE L



gam-po in the seventh century A.D. The Tibetan Buddhist images in metal, cast or beaten, are not as a rule made by the priestly class, but by lay-workers, mostly Nepalese.

The two banners reproduced in Plates XLIX.–LI. are Tibetan, and strongly impressed with Chinese feeling, but in many respects they are representative of Indian art-traditions, and, as they are in nearly perfect condition, they give a better idea of Indian religious painting than the ruined frescoes of Ajanta.

Before we discuss them it is necessary to explain that in Indian religious painting every one of the colours used has a special symbolic meaning.

White, both in Buddhist and in orthodox Hindu symbolism, signifies heavenly purity and bliss. It is the colour of Siva and of his snow-clad Himalayan paradise, and also that of Parvati, his consort.

White is also the colour-symbol of water.

Red is the colour of the sun, of Brahmâ, the Creator, and of the solar sphere, the abode of those spirits who have finished their earthly transmigration. The old Buddhist chronicles relate that King Harsha's father daily offered to Surya, the Sun-god, a bunch of red lotuses set in a pure vessel of ruby, and tinged, like his own heart, with the same hue.[1]

Blue, the colour of the firmament, is the symbol

[1] Vincent Smith, "Early History of India," p. 291.

of Vishnu, the Preserver, and of his incarnations, Krishna and Râma.

The combination red, white, and blue gives the distinctive colours of the Hindu Triad, or Trimûrti—Brahmâ, Siva, and Vishnu, or of their Buddhist counterparts.

Yellow is the colour of the ascetic's robe, and, in token of his mission, was adopted by Buddha's followers as the symbol of humanity. Images of Buddha, as well as those of Maitreya and Manjusri, are painted a golden yellow. Yellow is also the symbol of earth.

Green represents the animal kingdom.

Black is the colour-symbol of space. In the Hindu Sastras it represents the formless, conditionless state which existed before creation, and is personified by Kâlî, the Mother of the Universe and the Great Destroyer. "As the lightning is born from the cloud and disappears within the cloud, so Brahmâ and all other gods take birth from Kâlî and will disappear in Kâlî" (*Nirvana Tantram*). In Tibetan Buddhism it is the symbol of hell.[1]

[1] In the Tibetan book on the Buddhist religion, the Manikazum, which was compiled by order of King Srong-tsan-gam-po in the seventh century, the celebrated formula, AUM, MANI PADME HUM, is said to save from rebirth in either of the six conditions—*i.e.* as a *deva*, or god; *asura*, or demon; as a man; as an animal; as a goblin, or hopeless being; or as a devil. Each syllable has its symbolic colour: AUM, the heavenly state, is white (all the colours combined); MA, the *asura* state, is blue; NI, the human state, yellow; PAD, the animal state, green; ME, the state of a hopeless being, or goblin, red; HUM a being of hell, black.

The central figure in Plate XLIX. is Gautama, or Buddha in his earthly manifestation, seated on his lotus throne, attended by saints and Lamas on the right and left, with one of the guardian demons of Tibet at his feet.

The right hand of Buddha is pointing towards the earth in what is termed the "witness-bearing" gesture, referring to the legend of his temptation by Mâra, the spirit of evil, under the bodhi-tree at Gaya. When Mâra denied the good deeds in former existences through which Gautama was to attain his Buddhahood, and called upon him to prove them, he touched the earth and summoned it to bear witness for him. The earth trembled, and Mâta, the goddess, bearing in her hand a garland and riding on a tortoise, appears before them and says, "I will be thy witness!" Then, wringing her hair, a mighty flood came out from it, and swept away Mâra with all his vile myrmidons.

The green halo round his head would seem to symbolise his character as divine protector of the animal kingdom, or perhaps his fabled existences in the animal state which are narrated in the *jâtakas.* Behind the Buddha is the deer-park at Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon after his enlightenment, and where, it is said, in a previous existence he had saved the life of a doe and her young one by offering himself as a substitute.

Immediately over the head of the Buddha is his heavenly counterpart, the Dhyâni Buddha

Amîtâbha, holding the nectar of immortality. To the right and left, floating in the azure heavens,[1] Buddha appears again, in different manifestations, first in the attitude which denotes spiritual instruction, and, secondly, with hands folded in his lap, signifying meditation. To these two figures there is a double aureole, the inside one blue with golden rays, like that of the central figure, and the outside one orange, shading off into a faint rose-colour with another set of golden rays over it. The effect of the combination is very suggestive of the colours of sunrise and sunset in a clear sky.

The intention of the picture is best felt when it is placed so that the burnished gilt rays of the aureole reflect the light as they would in its original position behind the lamps of the Buddhist altar. We can then see that the meaning is an apotheosis of Light—Buddha, the Light of Asia, and Amîtâbha, the Buddhist Sun-god, or the principle of Infinite Light. To this mystic idea the dignified conventionalism and the almost diagrammatic simplicity of the treatment lend themselves much more impressively than a studied, elaborate naturalism.

This is not a phase of undeveloped æsthetic thought—an art lacking adequate power of expression—but a deliberate conviction based on a deep religious sentiment which feels the reticence

[1] The original pure lapis blue of the sky has been darkened by grease from the butter-lamps of the altar above which it was originally hung.

PLATE LI

A TIBETAN TEMPLE BANNER



necessary in the presence of mysteries too deep for the power of man to realise.

On the back of the painting there is a Buddhist formula, of which the following is a translation:

"He has put an end to sufferings and is freed from the cycle of earthly existences whoever has chastity and practised discipline in this religion."

The next Tibetan banner (reproduced in Plate LI.) illustrates some of the extravagances into which Indian artistic thought relapses when the virtue of its original spiritual power has left it. There is a sense of decorative effect, but none of the dignity of the human form in the sprawling eight-armed and three-headed deity, Siddhottara, "god of the white umbrellas," displayed in the centre. The decadence of the art will be realised best by comparing this figure with the Nepalese sculpture in Plate XIX., in which the same idea is treated with real artistic power and sentiment.

The eleven-headed figure at the foot, representing Avalokiteshvara, the guardian deity of Tibet, supposed to be incarnated in the Dalai Lama, is another thoroughly degenerate type, the viciousness of which is by no means redeemed by a certain virtuosity in the execution.

It is surprising, however, to find above these monstrosities a group full of spirituality and the most refined artistic feeling. In the centre is Amîtâbha, with Buddha on his right hand, and Asoka, the famous Buddhist emperor of India, on his left. On the right of Buddha is the Saint

Sri-Siddhartha, and above him the Bodhisattva Bhava. On Asoka's left are, first, Suchi-yasah, "the Saint of white fame"; next, Vidyâdhara Jina (probably identical with Vidhyâdhara Kumara-Sri—the Indian Buddhist monk who carried the famous sandal-wood image of Buddha to China). Above these two figures is the Śaint Ratna-Kirti.

The figure of Asoka is so beautiful that I have given it full size in Plate L. Here we can see, shining through Chinese and Tibetan superstitions, a reflection of the spirituality of the art of Ajanta, and some of the true sentiment of Indian art which inspired the sculptures of Borôbudûr.

Some of the same feeling has survived in the popular Indian religious pictures of the present day. Plate LII. shows a good type of a modern Vaishnavite painting in the Calcutta Art Gallery Collection. It represents Râma and Sîtâ enthroned at Ayodhya after the overthrow of Ravana and the termination of their exile. Râma's sword and the famous bow of Siva are on the ground in front of him, and Hanuman, the monkey-king, his faithful ally, is kneeling clasping the King's leg. His three brothers are in attendance on Râma's right, whilst on the opposite side a bevy of court ladies and musicians is waiting on the Queen.

The details of the throne, the royal crowns and

[1] I am indebted to Professor Vidyabhusan Sastri, of the Presidency College, Calcutta, for the identification of these figures.



THE CORONATION OF RAMA AND SITA

the umbrella, are rendered in relief with gilt gesso and glass. Real pearls are used in the jewellery and ornaments. In the background is given in miniature a most realistic picture of the palace and city of Ayodhya, with its inhabitants—King, courtiers, men-at-arms, richly caparisoned elephants and war-horses, the temples and sacred cows, the public bathing tank, the city walls, the river, and the country beyond—a perfect microcosm of the life and ceremonial of a royal Indian city.

CHAPTER II

MOGUL SECULAR ART

WE have seen in the last chapter that even in the pre-Mogul period the art of painting was cultivated as a *dilettante* amusement or accomplishment in the courts of Buddhist and Hindu sovereigns, but it was not until the Mogul times that a distinctly secular school of painting, derived originally from Persia, arose in India. In this secularisation of art the Mogul epoch in India may be compared with the Renaissance in Europe.

The direct origin of this secularisation was the formal prohibition by the Muhammadan law of the representations of animate nature in art. The effect of this law was virtually to suppress the practice of painting and sculpture as fine arts in all countries under Muhammadan rule, from the founding of the Caliphate of Baghdad down to the beginning of the thirteenth century.

With the decline of the spiritual power of the Caliphs the prohibition ceased to have full effect, but the revival of pictorial art in Persia did not

really begin until the overthrow of Arab rule by the Mongols, about the middle of the thirteenth century.

It is interesting to notice how, both in Europe and in Asia, such rude barbarians as the Mongols, who only revelled in rapine and bloodshed, and marked their progress with monuments of human skulls, were, just like other scavengers of civilisation—the Goths, Vandals, and Huns—the means of moving the intellectual waters and of bringing new inspiration into art.

The effect of the Mongol invasion on the civilisation of Western Asia is well summarised by Professor E. G. Browne in his "Literary History of Persia."

"Infinitely destructive and disastrous as it was to life, learning, and civilisation, and especially to the Arab culture, which, as have already seen, maintained itself with such extraordinary vitality in Persia for six centuries, long after the war of Arab conquest had utterly subsided, the Mongol invasion did, perhaps, contain some quickening elements, and the Mongol character, for all its reckless ferocity, some potentialities of good. One of its few good effects was the extraordinary intermixture of remote peoples, resulting in a refreshing of somewhat stagnant mental reservoirs, which it brought about. In Europe it was a cause, if not the chief cause, of the Renaissance, for it thrust the Ottoman Turks out of the obscurity of Khurásán into the prominence of Constantinople, and was thus ultimately responsible for the destruc-

tion of the Byzantine Empire and the dispersion of the Greeks and their treasures into Europe. . . . And within Asia it brought together, first in conflict and then in consultation, Persians and Arabs with Chinese and Tibetans, and confronted, on terms of equality which had not existed for five or six centuries, the doctors of Islam with Christian monks, Buddhist Lamas, Mongol *bakhshis* or medicine men, and the representatives of other religions and sects" (pp. 441, 442).

It is very important to remember, also, that from motives of self-interest, and not from any respect for art, these ferocious invaders, who massacred wholesale men, women, and children of the general population, usually spared the artisans and craftsmen, and thus preserved for their own uses the art-traditions of the countries they ravaged and desolated. Skilled craftsmen were always the prizes of war, and when an uncivilised race like the Mongols triumphed over a highly cultivated one the craftsmen of the defeated became the teachers of the victors; this transplantation into a new soil often brought new vigour into art, and was the beginning of great developments. When Timur, the ancestor of the Indian Mogul dynasty, withdrew his hordes from Northern India in 1398, after ravaging it with fire and sword, he took back with him as captives all the masons who had built the famous mosque at Ferozabad, in order that they might build one like it at Samarkand. Thus Indian art fulfilled once more its civilising mission,

and when, two and a half centuries later, Timur's descendant, Shah Jahan, was building the famous Taj Mahal at Agra, some of the principal masons were brought from Samarkand—probably descendants of Timur's captives.

The important part which craftsmen, more especially oriental craftsmen, have always played in the world's history as missionaries of civilisation, culture, and religion, is not generally recognised by bookmen. Even at the present day the Indian craftsman, deeply versed in his *silpa-Sastras*, learned in folk-lore and in national epic literature, is, though excluded from Indian universities—or rather, on that account—far more highly cultured, intellectually and spiritually, than the average Indian graduate. In medieval times the craftsman's intellectual influence, being creative and not merely assimilative, was at least as great as that of the priest and bookman. The Founder of Christianity was Himself a craftsman, and in those noblest monuments of the Christian faith—the Gothic cathedrals of medieval Europe—we can see that the splendid craftsmen of the Middle Ages preached and practised a religion like their Master's, pure and undefiled before God, while a self-indulgent and contentious priesthood wrangled over its dogmas.

It is curious that archæologists, who are so concerned in trying to prove that nearly all Indian art was derived from the West, should seem to be only dimly aware of the immeasurably greater

debt which European art and science owe to India, for they very rarely dwell upon it. From the time of the break-up of the Roman Empire, and even some centuries before, down to the days of the Renaissance, there was flowing into Europe a continuous undercurrent of Indian science, philosophy, and art, brought by the art-workers of the East. In the nature of things, what could have been the effect of Alexander's solitary raid into India, or even the more lasting influence of the Græco-Baktrian kingdom, compared with that of the successive streams of Asiatic invaders (barbarians, if you will) which century after century poured into Europe, bringing with their armies skilled craftsmen as engineers and armourers, followed by artisans of every kind, when, as often happened, a permanent occupation of a country took place?

Even uncultured marauders, like the Huns and Mongols, brought with them non-combatant craftsmen, to aid them in their attacks on walled towns, and to keep their fighting equipment in order: so that, while the fighting men of East and West were busy in cutting throats, the craftsmen of both sides fraternised in a secret freemasonry, founded on common artistic interests.

Indian idealism during the greater part of this time was the dominant note in the art of Asia which was thus brought into Europe; and when we find a perfectly oriental atmosphere and strange echoes of Eastern symbolism in the medieval

cathedrals of Europe, and see their structural growth gradually blossoming with all the exuberance of Eastern imagery, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Gothic architecture and Gothic handicraft owe very much to the absorption by the *bauhütten* of Germany, and other Western craft-guilds, of Asiatic art and science, brought by the thousands of Asiatic craftsmen who entered Europe in the first millennium of the Christian era; a period which in the minds of Europeans is generally a blank because the "Great Powers" were then located in Asia instead of in Europe.

Byzantine art and Gothic art derived their inspiration from the same source—the impact of Asiatic thought upon the civilisation of the Roman Empire. The first shows its effect upon the art of the Greek and Latin races, the other its influence upon the Romanesque art of the Teutonic and Celtic races. The spirit of Indian idealism breathes in the mosaics of St. Mark's at Venice, just as it shines in the mystic splendours of the Gothic cathedrals; through the delicate tracery of their jewelled windows, filled with the stories of saints and martyrs; in all their richly sculptured arches, fairy vaulting and soaring pinnacles and spires. The Italian Renaissance marks the reversion of Christian art to the pagan ideals of Greece, and the capture of art by the bookmen, leading to our present dilettantism and archæological views of art.

When a new inspiration comes into European

art it will come again from the East; but what irony there is in the present spectacle of the Christian nations of Europe, in the twentieth century, unconsciously using their influence to paganise the art of Asia!

To return to the history of Mogul art—the revival of painting in Persia under the Mogul rule was very largely due to the influence of the Chinese schools which, again, owed their inspiration originally to the art of India. In the early centuries of the Christian era the traditions of Indian religious art had been taken into Turkestan and China by Indian Buddhist missionaries and craftsmen, and by Chinese students taught in Indian universities. There they were acclimatised, and by the fusion of Indian idealism with the naturalism of the indigenous schools the modern schools of China and Japan originated, which are now much more familiar to European artists and art-critics than the art of India, to which they owe so much.

Under this Indian inspiration Chinese painting by the seventh century had reached an extraordinary degree of eminence, far surpassing the contemporary art of Europe. Dr. W. Anderson, in his great work on Japanese and Chinese painting, says:

"There is, perhaps, no section of art that has been so completely misapprehended in Europe as the pictorial art of China. For us the Chinese painter, past or present, is but a copyist who imitates with laborious and indiscriminating

exactness whatever is laid before him, rejoices in the display of as many and as brilliant colours as his subject and remuneration will permit, and is only original in the creation of monstrosities. Nothing could be more contrary to fact than this impression. If we omit from consideration the work executed for the foreign market—work which every educated Chinese would disown—the old masters of the Middle Kingdom, who as a body united grandeur of conception with immense power of execution, cared little for elaboration of detail, and except in Buddhist pictures, sought their best effects in the simplicity of black and white, or in the most subdued chromatic harmonies. . . . If we endeavour to compare the pictorial art of China with that of Europe, we must carry ourselves back to the days when the former was in its greatness. It may be safely asserted that nothing produced by the painters of Europe between the seventh and thirteenth centuries approaches within measurable distance of the works of the great Chinese masters who gave lustre to the T'ang, Sung, and Yuën dynasties : nor—to draw a little nearer to modern times—is there anything in the religious art of Cimabue that would not appear tame and graceless by the side of the Buddhistic compositions of Wu-Tao-Tsz', Li Lung-yen, and Ngan Huru. Down to the end of the Southern empire in 1279 A.D., the Chinese were at the head of the world in the art of painting, as in many things besides, and their nearest rivals were their own pupils, the Japanese."[1]

[1] "Pictorial Art in Japan," vol. ii., p. 262.

The artists of this new Iranian school of painting, revived by an infusion of Indian art-traditions naturalised in China, were the court painters of Babar, the first Mogul Emperor of India, who thus brought them back to the fountain-head of their art. But Mogul painting was, unlike Indian, a purely secular school. The general ban of the fine arts imposed by Islamic law was not entirely removed even by the Mogul emperors, and it continued to have full effect as far as religious art was concerned.

Painting as a fine art became a diversion for the Mogul emperors and their nobles: the artists of the courts of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, both Hindu and Muhammadan, were greatly encouraged in drawing and painting portraits, in illustrating legend and history or contemporary life, both in fresco on the walls of palaces and villas, and in exquisite miniature paintings, usually intended for the illustration of manuscripts. But not even Akbar, who took a most liberal and enlightened view of art, permitted the representation of a human being, or of the Deity, in a mosque or building consecrated to religion ; or attempted to revive a school of religious painting. The rule of the Sunna is scrupulously observed in the decoration of the great mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, where Akbar promulgated his new religion, " The Divine Faith."

The fresco paintings of the Mogul period, like those of Hindu times, have nearly all perished ;

PLATE LIII

A WOUNDED LION



only a few fragments remaining of the decoration of Akbar's palace at Fatehpur Sikri.[1]

Our present knowledge of Mogul painting is almost entirely derived from the miniature pictures, painted on a very fine Indian or Chinese paper, which in spite of the delicate material have more often survived, as they were frequently carefully preserved in royal libraries or in private collections.

In the early Mogul times oil-painting was not practised by Indian artists, and it should be understood that these miniature pictures were not as a rule hung on the walls of apartments, or used for decoration, like modern European cabinet pictures. The pictures of the Indian *chitrâsâlas* were always painted directly in the walls in fresco, but these miniature paintings were kept like valuable manuscripts, and only brought out occasionally to be handed round for discussion and criticism ; just as in Japan to-day the painted silk scrolls, called *kakemonos*, are displayed one at a time at a tea-party and afterwards carefully packed away. The refined artistic sense of the true Oriental *dilettante* would be outraged by the hideous jumble of heterogeneous pictures which we crowd together in modern exhibitions and use to "decorate" our houses.

[1] The most interesting of these is a full-length portrait of a lady, painted on a panel inside the building, known as "Miriam's House," probably the residence of Mariam Zâmâni, the mother of Jahangir: see "Handbook to Agra and the Taj," by the author.

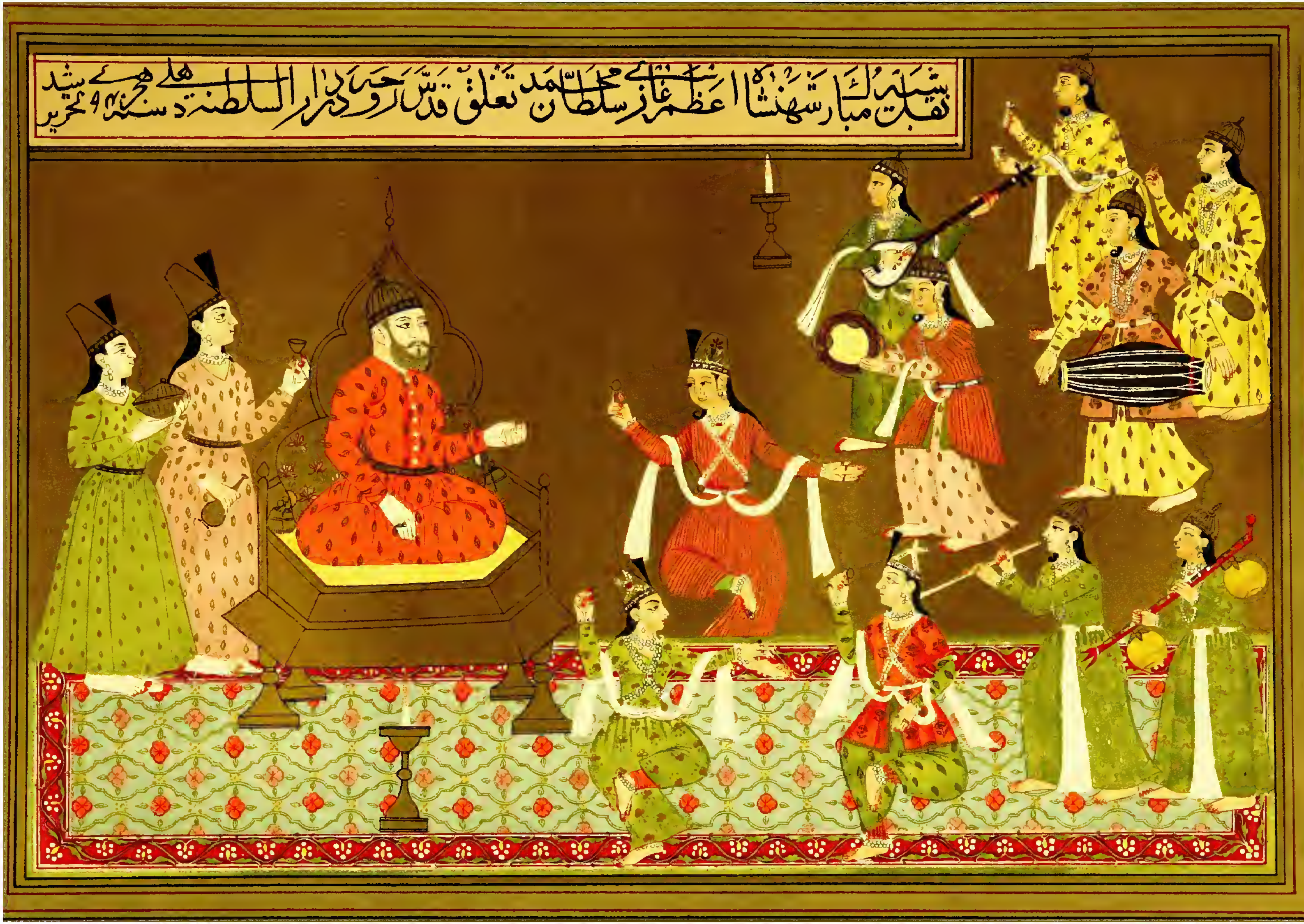
The early Mogul miniatures, or those dating from the time of Babar down to Akbar, nearly all exhibit the stiffness and strongly pronounced mannerisms of the contemporary Persian school to which most of them belong. Evidently the fine arts had sunk to a very low condition in Persia under the influence of the Caliphate of Baghdad, and the impulse brought from China in the thirteenth century had not succeeded in raising the standard above the level of conventional manuscript decoration. For the conventionalism of these paintings is that of a degenerate school which has ceased to look for and love the beauty of animate nature, and relapsed instead into a routine of mechanical formality.

Especially in the drawing of the human figure we miss entirely the wonderful sincerity and truthfulness in movement and in expression which give an indefinable charm to the conventionalism of the early Indian fresco paintings.

The Calcutta Art Gallery has, however, some paintings belonging to the Persian school of the early sixteenth century which show that by that time the true spirit of Indian art had begun to assert itself in the Muhammadan world. In the picture of a music party at the Court of Sultan Muhammad Tughlak, painted by Shapur, of Khorrasan in 1534, Plate LIV., we feel again the simple delight in the beauty of Nature, and the whole-hearted desire to be one with it, which breathe in the paintings of Ajanta and the

PLATE LIV

A NAUTCH PARTY AT THE COURT OF SULTAN MUHAMMAD TUGLAK



sculptures of Bôrôbudûr. The rhythm of the movement of the figures responding to the rhythm of the colour-scheme, make up a delightful harmony. Though severely conventional in composition, the group of musicians and dancing-girls is yet full of spontaneous grace. Their gentle gaiety and youthful light-heartedness tell us that the artist has penetrated beyond the usual squalid atmosphere of an oriental court; he bids us rejoice with him in life's unsullied spring-time, and listen to the music of the spheres.

The drawing of a wounded lion, a fragment of a hunting-scene of the same school and period, recalls the vigour and truth of the ancient sculptures of Nineveh. These, however, do not strictly belong to the Mogul art of India, though they indicate one of the sources of its inspiration. It was not until the time of Akbar and of his son Jahangir, that the Mogul court painters of India began to make an effort to shake off the stiffness and formality of the old Persian school and to draw fresh inspiration from the study of Nature which the Muhammadan law, as interpreted by the Caliphs, had denied them.

This new departure was due partly, perhaps, to the example of the Hindu painters with whom they came into contact in India, but more to the personal influence and encouragement of the Emperor Akbar himself, who, among his many other intellectual activities, found time to take the most practical interest in promoting the fine arts.

Abul Fazl, Akbar's Prime Minister and indefatigable biographer, in the courtly language of the "Aîn-i-Akbâri," refers to the prejudices of the orthodox Muhammadans of his time, and the Emperor's more liberal views:[1]

"I have to notice that the observing of the figures of objects and the making of likenesses of them are, for a well-regulated mind, a source of wisdom, and an antidote against the poison of ignorance. Bigoted followers of the letter of the law are hostile to the art of painting, but their eyes now see the truth.

"One day, at a private party of friends, His Majesty, who had conferred on several the pleasure of drawing near him, remarked: 'There are many that hate painting, but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God, for a painter, in sketching anything that has life, and in devising the limbs one after another, must come to feel that he cannot bestow personality upon his work, and is thus forced to thank God, the Giver of life, and will thus increase his knowledge.'

"Akbar," says Abul Fazl, "had from his earliest youth shown a great interest in painting, and given it every encouragement, regarding it both as a means of study and as an amusement.

"The works of all painters are weekly laid before His Majesty by the Dârôghahs and the clerks; he then confers rewards according to excellence of workmanship, or increases the monthly salaries. Much progress was made in the

[1] Blochman's translation, vol. i., pp. 107 *et seq.*

PLATE LV

A PORTRAIT OF YTIKAD KHAN



commodities required by painters, and the correct prices of such articles carefully ascertained. The mixture of colours has especially been improved. The pictures thus received a hitherto unknown finish.

"Most excellent painters are now to be found, and masterpieces worthy of a Bihzad (a famous painter of the court of Shah Ismail-i-Cafawî, of Persia)[1] may be placed at the side of the wonderful works of the European painters who have attained world-wide fame. The minuteness in detail, the general finish, the boldness of execution, etc., now observed in pictures are incomparable; even inanimate objects look as if they had life. More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, whilst the number of those who approach perfection, or those who are middling, is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus: their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them.

"The number of masterpieces of painting increased with the encouragement given to the art. Persian books, both prose and poetry, were ornamented with pictures, and a very large number of paintings were thus collected. The story of Hamzah was represented in twelve volumes, and clever painters made the most astonishing illustrations for no less than one thousand and four hundred passages of the story. The 'Chingiz-namah,' the 'Zafar-namah,' this book, the 'Razm-namah,' the 'Ramayan,' the 'Nal Daman,' the

[1] Two very interesting outline drawings of Bihzad are preserved in the Oriental Manuscripts department of the British Museum. They show very marked Mongolian influence.

'Kalilah Damnah,' the 'Ayâr Danîsh,' etc., were all illustrated.

"His Majesty himself sat for his likeness,[1] and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all the grandees of the realm. An immense album was thus formed; those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive have immortality promised them."

Abul Fazl gives a list of the celebrated painters of Akbar's Court. He singles out four for especial mention:

"Mir Sayyid Ali, of Tabriz." [Translator's note: "Better known as a poet, under the name of Juddi. He illuminated the story of 'Amir Hamzah,' mentioned above."]

"Khâjah Abduççamad, styled Shîrîn-qalam, or 'Sweet Pen.' He comes from Shiraz.

"Daswanth. He is the son of a palkee-bearer. He devoted his whole life to the art, and used, from love to his profession, to draw and paint figures even on walls. One day the eye of His Majesty fell on him; his talent was discovered, and he himself handed over to the Khâjah. In a short time he surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age. Unfortunately, the light of his talents was dimmed by the shadow of madness. He committed suicide. He has left many masterpieces.

"Basâwan. In backgrounding, drawing of features, distribution of colours, portrait painting, and several other branches, he is most excellent.

[1] A portrait of Akbar, bearing Jahangir's seal, was formerly in the Calcutta Art Gallery, but was transferred to the Victoria Memorial collection at Lord Curzon's request.

So much so that many critics prefer him to Daswanth."

The following thirteen painters are also mentioned by Abul Fazl as being famous:

"Kesu, Zál, Mukund, Mushkin, Farrukh the Qalmaq (Kalmuck), Mâdhû, Jagan, Mohesh, K'hêmkaran, Târâ, Sânwlah, Haribans, Râm."

A good many of the paintings by these artists are still in existence, but, except as regards minuteness of detail and careful finish, they do not, as a rule, deserve the high praise bestowed upon them by Akbar's chronicler. However well-intentioned, the criticism and supervision in technical details of their imperial patron, as well as the system of weekly rewards, must have been very embarrassing to the painters, and hardly calculated to bring out the highest artistic talent. The chief merit of Akbar's system of control was his insistence on the study of Nature and the drawing of portraits, etc., direct from life.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, has recently acquired a part of the "Akbarnama," with about one hundred and ten illustrations, mostly by the painters whom Abul Fazl places in the second class, but including several with the signature of Basawan, who is reckoned among the most famous of Akbar's artists.

Though there is great delicacy in the execution, in most of them—not excluding those with Basawan's signature—the colouring is heavy,

sometimes even crude ; the action of the figures is generally stiff and unnatural, and the composition without any distinction of style. One remarkable exception, which stands out from the rest in beauty of composition and colouring, is a charming picture signed by " Farruckh Beg," who is evidently Farrukh the Kalmuck mentioned by Abul Fazl. This, however, belongs entirely to the Chinese school.

One interesting fact brought out by these paintings is that they were frequently drawn by one artist and painted by another. Possibly Akbar, who loved to regulate the smallest details of his Court, introduced this rather inartistic division of labour, which may account for the curious, confused style of some of the paintings. There had been for many centuries in China and Japan a real division in art-practice between outline-work and painting ; but to employ an outline artist and a painter to work together on the same picture seems to have been an innovation. The practice is also referred to by Jahangir in his memoirs, but it was not apparently long continued by the Mogul artists.

The attention which Akbar is said to have devoted to the preparation of pigments is far from showing good results in these paintings, which in many cases exhibit a crudeness and disharmony of colour very unusual in pure oriental art. The modern legend that the Mogul painters used pounded precious stones for their colours perhaps

originated from a literal interpretation of an ordinary figure of speech: the only colour-materials used by them which approach to a "precious" stone are the blue of lapis lazuli, and a red made from coral.

The British Museum has a "Babar-nama" from Akbar's collection illustrated by many of the same artists, and the Maharajah of Jaipur possesses an illustrated "Razm-nama" which is said to have cost Akbar more than £40,000. There are also a few fine works by Akbar's painters in private collections in Europe, but they rarely reach the high-water mark of Mogul pictorial art. Akbar's reign was a period of transition in Indian art, and the good effects of the greatest of the Mogul's interest in painting was not fully apparent until after he had passed away.

Jahangir, Akbar's intemperate son (1605-1628), inherited few of his father's greater qualities, but was equally devoted to the fine arts. His memoirs contain many evidences of the keen personal and even affectionate interest which he took in his court painters and their work. He treated them as intimate friends and frequently bestowed upon them the highest distinctions. Jahangir himself tells us that he raised Sherif Khan, the son of Abdul Hamad—one of Akbar's portrait painters—who had grown up with him from infancy and upon whom, while heir-apparent, he had conferred the title of Khan, to the position of premier grandee of the empire.

In the thirteenth year of his reign the memoirs record :

"This day Abu'-l-Hasan, a painter, who bore the title of Nâdiru-zamân, drew a picture of my Court and presented it to me. He had attached it as a frontispiece to the 'Jahangir-nama.' As it was well worthy of praise, I loaded him with great favours. If the celebrated Abûl-Haî and Bihzâd were now alive they would do him full justice for his exquisite taste in painting.

"His father, Âka-Razâ, was always with me while I was a prince, and his son was born in my household. However, the son is far superior to the father. I gave him a good education, till he became one of the most distinguished men of the age. The portraits furnished by him are beautiful.

"Mansur is also a master of the art of drawing, and he has the title of Nâdiru-l-Aslî. In the time of my father and my own there have been none to compare with these two artists."

Neither Abúl-Hasan nor Mansur is mentioned in Abul Fazl's list, so probably they came into prominence in the later period of Akbar's reign. The Calcutta Art Gallery has two beautiful specimens of Mausur's work, which will be noticed hereafter.

Jahangir makes an interesting allusion to his own ability as a connoisseur, and to the practice which obtained of dividing the work of painting a picture between several different artists :

"I am very fond of pictures," he says, "and have such a discrimination in judging them that

PLATE LVI

STUDY OF AN OLD MAN



I can tell the name of the artist, whether living or dead. If there were several portraits [in the same picture] painted by several artists I could point out the painter of each. Even if one portrait were finished by several painters I could mention the names of those who had drawn the different portions of that single picture. In fact, I could declare without fail by whom the brow and by whom the eyelashes were drawn, or if any one had touched up the portrait after it was drawn by the first painter."

Though we may feel incredulous of the remarkable critical powers which Jahangir asserted for himself, it seems likely that he possessed a rare discrimination, for the pictures bearing his seal are among the finest of the whole Mogul period.

The style of the early Mogul paintings shows that a close observation of nature was not the practice of that school. Jahangir gives corroborative evidence of this in another passage, where he mentions that he had received a number of rare birds and animals from Goa, and ordered their actual likenesses to be drawn:

"The Emperor Babar has in his memoirs given an able description and pictured representation of several animals; but it is most probable that he never ordered the painters to draw them from the life."

It was, no doubt, the practice of direct study from nature, re-introduced by Akbar, which

brought about the very remarkable development in the power of artistic expression which is evident in the best drawings and paintings of Jahangir's time. But "drawing from the life" is never taken in the same sense as it is in modern European academies. It did not mean that the student sat down by the side of his model and commenced to reproduce as closely as possible its reflection on the retina of his own eyes; but that, after a most careful observation of the model, he went away and recorded his mental impression of it, returning occasionally, if necessary, to refresh his memory. In this way the artist's powers of memory were developed to an extraordinary degree.

One of the most amusing passages in the "Memoirs of Sir Thomas Roe," who was sent by James I., in the interests of the East India Company, to the Court of the Great Mogul, is concerned with Jahangir's pride in the skill of his painters. The directors of the Company, who were evidently aware what were the most acceptable presents at the Mogul Court, had sent some pictures with the ambassador: they had previously sent out portraits of James and his Queen, Anne of Denmark, as well as one of Sir Thomas Smyth, Governor of the Company, which was much prized by Jahangir, as his painters, so it was said, confessed their inability to imitate it.[1]

Finding that Jahangir was more pleased with

[1] "The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe," edited by William Foster, B.A. vol. i., p. 143, note 3.

pictures than with anything else, Roe presented him with one of his own:

"A Pickture of a friend of myne that I esteemed very much, and was for Curiositye rare, which I would give his Maiestie as a present, seeing hee so much affected that art; assuring myselfe he never saw any equall to it, neyther was anything more esteemed of mee."

This was a painting by Isaac Oliver, the English miniaturist.

Jahangir was extremely pleased with the picture, but offered to bet with the ambassador that his court painters would make a copy which Roe could not distinguish from the original. After some diplomatic fencing, Roe, who had formed a very poor opinion of Indian artists from the pictures he had seen, agreed to "lay a good horse" with the Minister, Asaph Khan; but the latter, he added in his diary, "recanted in Priuat."

Some weeks afterwards the ambassador was summoned to the Durbar and was first asked by Jahangir, who had satisfied himself of the quality of his artist's performances, what he would give the painter if his copy fulfilled the terms of the wager. "A painter's reward—50 rupees," said Sir Thomas, rather contemptuously. Jahangir replied that this was insufficient, for his painter was "a Cauallero"—a gentleman.

The copies, when produced, were five in number, pasted together with the original "on one table," and so like that Roe was—

"by candlelight troubled to discerne which was which; I confess beyond all expectation: yet I showed myne owne and the differences which were in arte apparent, but not to be judged by a Common eye. But for that at first sight I knew it not, hee [Jahangir] was very merry and joyfull, and craked like a Northern man."

Jahangir again exultingly insisted upon knowing what reward Roe would give to his painter, and, refusing any offer of money, finally settled that, in exchange for one of the copies which Jahangir gave, the artist should choose one of the English "toyes" Roe had brought with him.

Though the test imposed by Jahangir was one of ordinary technical skill, and not very convincing, there is no doubt that there were many distinguished artists among his court painters. The subtle refinement of the Indian miniaturist's art was evidently lost upon Roe, and the more obvious realism of European painting appealed to him, just as it does to "a Common eye" in India to-day.

A very interesting incident in the history of Mogul art is revealed in the recent discovery that Indian miniature paintings, brought to Europe about this time, supplied material for a great Dutch master who was a contemporary of Jahangir and Shah Jahan—Rembrandt. Among Rembrandt's pen-and-ink studies collected in the British Museum, the Louvre, and elsewhere, a number have been identified as copies or adapta-

PLATE LVII

PRINCE MUHAMMAD MURAD ON THE ELEPHANT IQBAL

From a drawing by Gholam



tions of Indian miniatures, and it has been shown that, from them chiefly, Rembrandt derived the oriental atmosphere for his Biblical subjects.

Professor Sarre, in his monograph on the subject,[1] gives side by side reproductions of the original Mogul miniature paintings or drawings, and Rembrandt's pen-and-ink sketches. The British Museum possesses a drawing by Rembrandt copied from a Mogul miniature of "Akbar, (?)[2] on his throne," now in the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin. The latter museum has also an original Mogul painting of an "Indian Prince on Horseback," Rembrandt's copy of which is in the British Museum. The Louvre has another study by him of "Timur on his Throne," copied, with a few variations, from an Indian miniature painting now in Berlin.

It appears that in 1631 Rembrandt resided at Amsterdam, then the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company, and a great centre of European trade with the Orient. Rembrandt's paintings reveal him as a mystic at heart, in spite of his environment, and he took a great interest in everything connected with the East. In 1642 he painted the portrait of Abraham Wilmerdonks, director of the East India Company, who had a considerable oriental collection. Rembrandt himself collected oriental costumes, wood-carving, and

[1] "Jahrbuch den Kön. Preuszischen Kunst Sammlungen," xxv. Berlin, 1904.

[2] Mr. G. P. Rouffaer has pointed out that this is Jahangir, not Akbar.

paintings. In the inventory of his effects made after his bankruptcy in 1656 there is an entry of "a book of curious miniature drawings," which may have been the Mogul miniatures from which he made the pen-and-ink studies referred to.

Professor Sarre is doubtless right in pointing out that, though Rembrandt made use of these miniatures for his oriental accessories, it cannot be said that his art was deeply influenced by them: European critics do not always show such discernment when they discover Indian artists borrowing Western details for their own use. At the same time it is probable that Rembrandt appreciated them highly, as every artist will. Rembrandt's art was entirely individual, and not founded on any school; but there is a close affinity between the technique of the Mogul portrait painters and the traditions of the early Dutch and Flemish schools, which might have appealed to him. Very widely apart as the Mogul painting is from Rembrandt's art in methods and point of view, there is an affinity between them in choice of subject: in both of them we find solemn, mysterious effects of concentrated light—especially the contrasts of nocturnal darkness with torchlight and firelight—and in both of them these effects are treated with wonderful largeness and poetic feeling. Plates LXIV., LXV., are fine examples of this little-known development in Mogul painting.

CHAPTER III

INDIAN MINIATURE PAINTING

THE miniatures of the Mogul school may be divided into four classes: first, finished outline drawings and sketches, mostly portraits; second, studies of birds and animals, both in outline and in colour, and often made direct from nature; third, painted portraits; and fourth, historical pictures, *genre*, etc.

Before the invention of printing the miniaturist's art was always closely connected with that of calligraphy, and the extraordinary technical skill of the Mogul outline drawings, as well as the style of the draftsmanship, was no doubt directly due to the manual dexterity first acquired in the art of fine writing. In Mogul, as in most Saracenic decoration, long texts from the Koran in various ornamental characters took the place of the painted or sculptured figures and animals found in Hindu work.

Abul Fazl, in the "Ain-i Akbari," thus discourses on calligraphy, which even in the present day is an accomplishment highly considered by cultured Muhammadans of the old school:

"I shall first say something of the art of writing, as it is the most important of the two arts. His Majesty pays much attention to both, and is an excellent judge of form and thought. And, indeed, in the eyes of the friends of true beauty, a letter is the source from which the light confined within it beams forth; and, in the opinion of the far-sighted, it is the world-reflecting cup in the abstract.[1] The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry, emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate, it contains the secret of the word, and is the tongue of the hand. . . . A letter is the portrait-painter of wisdom; a rough sketch from the realm of ideas; a dark night ushering in the day; a black cloud pregnant with knowledge; the wand for the treasures of insight; speaking, yet dumb; stationary, yet travelling; stretched on the sheet, and yet soaring upwards" (vol. i., p. 97, Blochman's translation).

Abul Fazl mentions that in Iran and Turan, India and Turkey, there were eight calligraphical systems current. In China the invention of drawing as one of the six branches of calligraphy is referred by tradition to the legendary monarch, Fa-hi, who is supposed to have reigned from 2852 to 2737 B.C.

The style of the handwriting of a language influenced greatly the style of the artist's draftsmanship. For instance, the great variety of the

[1] The fabulous cup of King Jamshid, which revealed the secrets of the seven heavens.

[2] Anderson, "Pictorial Arts of Japan," vol. ii., p. 253.

PLATE LVIII

A PORTRAIT OF SA'DI



strokes in Chinese and Japanese ideographs has given an immense fluency and variety to the outline-drawings of the artists of those countries, so much so that in Japan ten different styles of line-drawing are recognised, each style representing a special character or mode of artistic expression. In writing Persian, the court language of the Moguls, or the more regular characters of the Indian languages, the hand would acquire less freedom but a more concentrated and delicate touch, and consequently, though the Mogul drawings have not the fluency of the Chinese and Japanese, we find in them the certainty and precision of a medallist, and a truly marvellous delicacy and refinement.

This outline-drawing was in India, as it is in China and Japan to-day, a speciality. As we have already noticed, in the time of Akbar and Jahangir a picture was frequently outlined by one artist and painted by another. The lines were drawn, not with a pen, but with a fine brush made from the hairs of a squirrel's tail. A preliminary sketch was generally made in Indian red, used without gum, so that when dry the colour could be brushed away, leaving a very faint indication of the drawing. The finished line was then drawn with lamp-black, specially prepared by burning a camphorated cotton wick in a mustard-oil lamp. Sometimes the drawing was delicately shaded, and some of the details heightened with gold or tinted. The artists prided them-

selves on the fineness of their brushes, and the test of supremest skill was to finish the detail with an *ek bâl kalam*, "a one-haired brush," which seems to have been used for microscopic stippling as well as for drawing the finest lines.

The reproductions in Plates LV., LVI., LVII., will give some idea of the wonderful distinction, delicacy, and charm, and withal masterful strength of this Indian outline-drawing, though there is in it an elusive quality which no process of reproduction can preserve. Apparently without effort and with the most simple means, his unfaltering line flowing in a never-broken rhythm, the Mogul artist gives us a perfect totality, full of form, character, and life. There is no weakness, no hesitation or attempt to shirk difficulties, so that one can share the artist's full delight in the perfection of his technique. With all the sincerity, truthfulness, and perfect finish of the old Dutch and Flemish masters, these drawings have a delicate flavour of their own, a subtlety and sensitiveness which suggest the music of the Indian *vîna* or the sonnets of Hafiz and Omar Khayyam. And though they are only shaded outlines, with an occasional discreet touch of gold or colour, they are perfectly complete and satisfying as works of art, for the strength of the drawing gives them all the relief of a finished cameo.

The portrait of Ytikad Khan, Plate LV., brings us into intimate acquaintance with a polished Mogul courtier of the sixteenth or seven-

PLATE LIX

A PORTRAIT OF SA'DI

Enlarged to four times the original size



teenth century, a perfect type of a cultured, well-bred Indian nobleman of the old school. The character of the head and pose of the figure are rendered with the same consummate skill and faithfulness as the features, beard, and other details, including the folds of the sleeves and tight-fitting trousers.

Plate LVI., an unfinished study of an old man in facsimile, will show more of the technical beauty in this line-brush work, though the reproduction has failed to do full justice to the crispness of touch in the original. The Mogul artist, with his brush, could draw lines with the delicacy and fineness of the etcher's needle-point. This drawing approaches closer to the freedom of Chinese and Japanese masters than most of the Mogul line-work.

Another masterly drawing, finished with great minuteness and heightened with gold, is a group of elephants, Plate LVII., which bears this inscription in Persian : "Prince Muhammad Murad, son of Shah Jahan, on the elephant Iqbal, drawn by Gholam in 1030 A.H. (A.D. 1621)." The interest is concentrated on the great elephant, which has apparently become unruly, as he is flourishing the mahout's goad in his trunk and trumpeting loudly. The Prince has climbed on to his back to take the mahout's place, while the latter, or one of the attendants, is chaining the elephant's legs. The excited movement of the great beast is splendidly given and the vigour of the composition

is not less striking than the finish of the technique, both in the drawing of the three elephants and in the careful study of the banyan-tree behind.

An important branch of the court artists' training was to learn to draw from memory traditional portraits, such as those of the Emperor's ancestors, or of other great historical personages for whose likeness there was a regular demand. A collection of these historical portrait types, derived sometimes from old contemporary portraits, and sometimes from the artist's own imagination, was part of the stock-in-trade of an Indian miniature painter.

The exquisite coloured drawing of Jahangir's time, inscribed, "A portrait of Sa'di of Shiraz (May God sanctify his tomb!)," belongs to this class. Sa'di visited India in the first half of the thirteenth century, and it is possible that his portrait may have been drawn by Indian artists of that time; or a contemporary portrait by Persian artists may have existed in Jahangir's collection. This drawing, however, is not a mere copy, but a most careful study from life, founded on a recognised traditional type known to the Mogul artists. Probably one of Jahangir's court poets served as a model.

It gives a very convincing presentment of the famous Persian poet: a pose full of dignity, and a face which shows great force of character. We can realise his adventurous life, which he tells in his "Gulistân": how he travelled through Northern

PLATE LX

A PORTRAIT OF SURAJ MAL, SON OF AMAR SINGH



India and Africa, Abyssinia, Central Asia, Syria and Arabia

"in true dervish fashion, in all sorts of ways, and mixing with all sorts of people. Stumbling after the Pilgrim's Caravan through the burning deserts of Arabia, now bandying jests with a fine technical flavour of grammatical terminology with school-boys of Káshghar, now a prisoner in the hands of the Franks, condemned to hard labour in the company of Jews in the Syrian town of Tripoli, now engaged in investigating the mechanism of a wonder-working Hindoo idol in the temple of Somnáth, and saving his life by killing the custodian who discovered him engaged in this pursuit."[1]

Whether it was an authentic likeness of Sa'di may be open to doubt, but it is certainly a fine conception of the hardy old poet, and a splendid study of life and character, carried out with such consummate mastery of technique and expression as to make it great in art, in spite of the diminutive scale of execution.

The strength and thoroughness of the draftsmanship can only be fully appreciated by examining the original with a magnifying glass, but the enlargement of half the figure to twice the original size which is given in Plate LIX. will give some idea of them. It speaks much for the artist's technique that it can be so much enlarged without losing any of its fine quality, and we can understand from this that the Mogul artists' fresco

[1] Browne's "Literary History of Persia," p. 529.

paintings on a large scale, of which only a few fragments now remain, must have been quite as remarkable as their miniature work.[1]

Plate LX. is a beautiful example of Mogul painted portraiture in the best period. It bears Jahangir's seal, and a note in Persian, apparently written by himself, "a portrait of Surajmal, the son of Amar Singh, painted by Nanha." This is a type of those sturdy Rajput warriors, some of whom, through Akbar's tactful diplomacy, became the Great Mogul's most faithful adherents, after a gallant but vain struggle for independence.

The picture is a delightful little gem. Worthy of comparison with Holbein for faithful, refined workmanship and strong characterisation, it arrests attention more by its exquisite feeling for colour, which invests the rather prosaic form and features of the model with a wonderful distinction. The painter, like Holbein, does not make use of shadows, but with most delicate modelling and strength of drawing he has succeeded in giving the roundness and explaining the meaning of every form.

The picture is mounted on a superbly designed decorative frame-work. First there are two narrow borders, in one of which a Persian sonnet is

[1] The Mogul miniaturists did occasionally paint portraits on a scale even larger than the enlargement here given. The Art Gallery formerly possessed a very fine example, a portrait of Dara Shikoh, about half life-size. This was transferred to the Victoria Memorial collection at Lord Curzon's request, where it is now, I am glad to say, valued so highly that the Trustees considered it unsafe to allow me to reproduce it.

PLATE LXI

STUDY OF A WHITE CRANE



arranged in cartouches, with floral decoration; outside them there is a wide edge of exquisite Persian floral diapers exactly in the style of the *pietra dura* decorations of the Taj Mahal at Agra, which are always wrongly attributed by Anglo-Indian tradition to the French adventurer at Shah Jahan's Court, Austin de Bordeaux.

The supreme skill and taste with which the Mogul miniatures are mounted add greatly to the charm of the pictures. The borders were generally the work of another artist, but they are frequently not inferior as works of art to the pictures themselves.

The name of the artist Nanha is not, so far as I am aware, mentioned in the records of Jahangir's reign, but the Calcutta Art Gallery possesses two, possibly three, finished studies in colour by Mansur, the painter on whom Jahangir conferred the title of Nadiru-l-Aslî, and whom he described as being, together with Abul Hasan, the best artist of his time.

One of these is a most careful and delicate study, evidently from nature, of a Bengal florican. On it Jahangir himself has written the following note in Persian:

"This is a picture of a bird called jurz-i-bur, painted by Ustad Mansur, the most remarkable painter of his time: written by Jahangir Akbar Shah in the year 19 [A.D. 1624]."

The minuteness of the detail makes it difficult to do justice to this interesting study in a reproduction.

The other one is the magnificent "Picture of a White Crane" reproduced in Plate LXI., which amply justifies Jahangir's pride in the skill of his court painters, for as an ornithological study it rivals the work of the best Japanese masters. The delicate feathers of the white plumage and the microscopic details of the bird's anatomy are drawn with infinite patience and scientific exactitude—qualities which might have been infinitely tedious had they not been combined with consummate taste and judgment. For every touch is put in with a masterly appreciation of its just value, so that amidst the extraordinary wealth of detail artistic unity is always preserved.

The painting of a turkey-cock, Plate LXII., is possibly another work by Mansur. It also bears Jahangir's seal, and its history is given by Jahangir himself in the diary of the seventh year of his reign, as recorded in the "Wakiat-i-Jahangiri." Mukarrab Khan, who had been sent on a mission to Goa, brought back several rarities he had purchased for the Emperor.

"Among them," says Jahangir, "were a few animals which excited my curiosity and which I had never seen before. No one even knew their names. The Emperor Babar has in his memoirs given an able description and pictured representation of several animals, but it is most probable that he never ordered the painters to draw them from the life. But as the animals now before me were of such exquisite

PLATE LXII

A TURKEY-COCK

By one of Jahangir's Court painters



rarity, I wrote a description of them and ordered that their pictures should be drawn in the 'Jahangiri-nama' with the view that their actual likenesses might afford a greater surprise to the reader than the mere description of them."

"One of the birds resembled a peahen, but was a little larger in size, though less than a peacock. When he was desirous of pairing he used to spread his tail and feathers and danced about like a peacock. His beak and feet resembled those of a barn-door fowl. His head, neck, and throat changed their colour every minute, but when anxious to pair he became a perfect red and seemed to be a beautiful piece of coral. After some time he was as white as cotton, and sometimes he got as blue as a turquoise, and, in short, turned all colours, like a chameleon. The piece of flesh which is attached to his head looks like the comb of a cock. But the curious part of it was that that piece of flesh, when he was about to pair, hung down a span long, like the trunk of an elephant, and when again restored to its position it was erected over the head to the height of two fingers. The part round his eyes remained constantly of a blue colour, and was never subject to change, which was not the case with his wings, which were always changing their colour, contrary to those of a peacock." [1]

This graphic description, as the translator observes in his note, was evidently meant for a turkey-cock, "which, strange to say, is in Turkish ascribed to India, and called *Hind Taughi*."

There is not much doubt that this splendid

[1] Elliott's "History of India," vol. vi., pp. 331, 332.

little study, which sums up so admirably the arrogant swagger of the turkey-cock and all the characteristics of his plumage, is the original painting ordered by Jahangir.

The portrait group of Muhammadan Mullahs seated in a terrace with a landscape background (*Frontispiece*) is by a painter of Shah Jahan's reign (1628–58). The old man in white, with his knees tied up according to Indian ideas of comfort, and attended by a servant, is receiving two visitors, one of whom, dressed in pink, with a brown cloak, is addressing him with great earnestness, while his companion, in grey, with a pale green shawl, listens attentively. Each head is a study, drawn with the keenest appreciation of character, and the sentiment of the whole scene—the courtly, oriental etiquette, and the earnest conversation—is expressed with masterly skill.

Behind the figures, whose costumes make a delightful combination of delicate colour-harmonies, there is a large tree, and a few graceful flowering shrubs, with water beyond, and high ground, on which is built a walled town or fortress. A glowing sunset in the sky is effectively suggested with a blaze of gold and a few skilful touches of orange, pink, and pale blue.

The perspective is unscientific, and there is hardly any attempt to reproduce atmospheric tones ; the artist was absorbed in the decorative quality of his forms and colour-harmonies, and in the human interest of the scene. He cared only

for imitation so far as it was necessary for his scheme. To "the common eye," accustomed to the striking illusion of modern European painting and photography, this may seem to betray a lack of artistic power. It would be waste of effort to attempt to convince those who require their artistic convictions to be fortified with scientific arguments that in this picture perspective and atmospheric effect are not wanted, just because the artist could do without them. When a perfect system of colour-photography, with the requisite amount of manipulation to reproduce "artistic" effects, provides the public with the cheap illusion it now expects from picture-painters, it may begin to realise that creation, not imitation, is the true aim of art.

The exquisitely finished picture of which Plate LXIII. is a reproduction probably represents the highest achievements of the Mogul artists in painting the nude figure, though painting nudity for its own sake, or as a test of skill, was never the aim of an Indian artist. The perfect technique and the mastery of human anatomy seem to indicate that it belongs to the best period of Mogul art, *i.e.* the first sixty years of the seventeenth century, but the exact historical incident it represents is an open question.

The scene is in the courtyard of a palace. Over the entrance gateway is a partly obliterated inscription, of which the words "Shah Jahangir" only are decipherable. In the lower right-hand

corner there is a signature which reads like "Manuchihar Bandâ."

A party of bricklayers is busily engaged in building a wall, evidently with the object of shutting off some of the apartments of the palace from access to the main entrance; a man with a long black beard is preparing the mortar for the bricks, assisted by a *bhishti*, who is bringing water for it.

The prostrate figure of the old man in the foreground seems to represent the occupier of the palace, begging mercy from his jailors or executioners—the two dark-complexioned men standing by him. From their deprecating air, and the expression of sorrow on their faces, the latter appear to be performing a very painful duty.

A bowl is placed on the ground close to the feet of one of them. Does it contain the fatal draught with which the Mogul emperors so often disposed of those who incurred their displeasure? and, if so, who is the unfortunate victim here represented? Or does this picture illustrate the tradition that Aurangzîb bricked up a portion of the Agra palace to prevent the escape of his father, Shah Jahan?

Whatever may be the subject, the marvellously refined technique and exquisite feeling for colour give it a rare distinction. The nearly nude figures of the workmen are unusually fine in drawing and modelling; the natural freedom of their movements shows what immense strides the artists of

PLATE LXIII

SCENE IN A PALACE COURTYARD



the Mogul Court had made in the study of life since the days of Akbar.

As a rule, there is very little evidence of European influence in Mogul painting. The Mogul artists sometimes made copies of European pictures when they were required to do so, but their own work does not show that they ever took any real interest in them. The endeavour to assimilate European ideas is nearly always disastrous to the oriental artist, on account of the opposition between his views of life and of Nature and those which govern Western art.

A curious instance of this is to be found in the work of a Persian artist of the early seventeenth century, who was sent to Europe by Shah Abbas to study painting in Rome. His pictures, some of which are now preserved in the British Museum, reveal a hopeless conflict between his subconscious views of art and his painful effort to show things as he was wanted to show them ; the result being, on the one hand, the total loss of what was valuable in his own art, and, on the other, a complete failure to reproduce anything of artistic value in his translation of European art.

The conspicuous failure of the great masters of the Renaissance to transform an oriental artist into a European one is only an illustration of that incompatibility between Eastern and Western ideas which has existed ever since the philosophical schools of Takshasila, Benares, Nalanda, and Sridhanya Kataka formulated the

canons of Indian art; but where they failed we still fatuously hope to succeed, or, what is more foolish, believe we are doing so.

It is an open question whether the introduction into Mogul painting of landscapes with effects of chiaroscuro came from the study of European pictures imported into India, or whether it was due to Chinese influence. Anderson says that the Chinese, as landscape painters, anticipated their European brethren by over a score of generations, and created transcripts of scenery that for breadth, atmosphere, and picturesque beauty can scarcely be surpassed. The connection of Chinese art with Indian, even in the Mogul times, was infinitely closer than the European, though we are accustomed to attribute any development of a naturalistic tendency which we discover in Mogul art to European influence.

Indian art cannot, however, show any separate school of landscape painting such as is found in China and Japan; but landscape backgrounds to figure-subjects are frequently used with a complete understanding of the true function of the fine art, as Emerson has nobly expressed it:

"In landscapes the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of Nature, he should omit, and give us only the spirit and the splendour. He should know that the landscape has beauty to the eye because it expresses a thought which is to him good, and this because the same power

PLATE LXIV

A PRINCE AND PRINCESS RIDING BY TORCHLIGHT



which sees through his eyes is seen in that spectacle; and he will come to value the expression of Nature, and not Nature itself, and so exalt in his copy the features which please him. He will give the gloom of gloom and the sunshine of sunshine."

Night and effects of artificial light seem to have an especial attraction for the Indian painter, and these are often handled with magnificent breadth and fine feeling. Two examples from the Calcutta Art Gallery, probably late eighteenth or early nineteenth century work, are given in Plates LXIV., LXV. In the former a young Rajput Prince and Princess are riding by night through a mountain pass, an attendant walking on foot between them; a masalchi in front carefully shows the way with a flaming torch. The darkness closes round the travellers and pursues the torch's glare. The lady is pointing eagerly forward, as if to show her gladness that the journey's end is now in sight. The legs and half of the bodies of the high-mettled steeds are painted red—an ancient custom with Rajput chivalry to symbolise the blood of their enemies through which they waded to victory. The crescent moon peeps behind the hill on the right, and there is a glimpse of a river in the plain below.

Wonderfully harmonious are the contrasts of tone and colour—broadly and simply expressed—the blaze of the torch lighting up the path in

[1] Essay on Art.

front, throwing the horses and their riders into a warm relief of vivid colour between the darkness and the light; half-revealing, half-obscuring the glowing masses of the rocks behind, fringed by the dark edges of the forest. Through the gap between the hills the sky is seen faintly lighted by the moon, and with true poetic insight, the artist makes us feel the "gloom of gloom" and the stillness of the night.

The scene may be in the rugged hills of Rajputana, in the fastnesses of which the gallant Rajput chiefs often took refuge when their country was overrun by the Mogul armies. No doubt the artist had often watched such an effect as this and imbibed its solemn, mysterious beauty. The largeness and generalisation of the treatment are qualities which modern European painters of the impressionist school have often aimed at, but seldom realised with so much spontaneity and little self-consciousness as this Indian picture exhibits, for here there is no conscious effort to produce an effect called artistic, but a simple interpretation of Nature as it revealed itself to the artist.

The conventional style of the drawing of the figures and horses shows less knowledge of anatomy than the artists of Jahangir's time possessed. But the essential movements which tell the story are expressed with perfect truth and understanding. There is charming sentiment in the gracious head of the Princess, and the watch-

PLATE LXV

DEER HUNTING BY NIGHT



ful attention of the torch-bearer is given with great sincerity.

The orthodox critic in Europe treats impressionism as a new and somewhat peculiar development in modern art, towards which he must maintain a strictly guarded, if not hostile, attitude. It is sometimes a speciality, but more often a fad. To the academic professor it is a dangerous tendency, almost a vice, which should be sternly repressed in all students. The true oriental artist regards it as the breath of life, the end of all art; he thinks that, of all artistic faculties, the one which must be trained and developed to the highest degree is the faculty of realising thought-impressions.

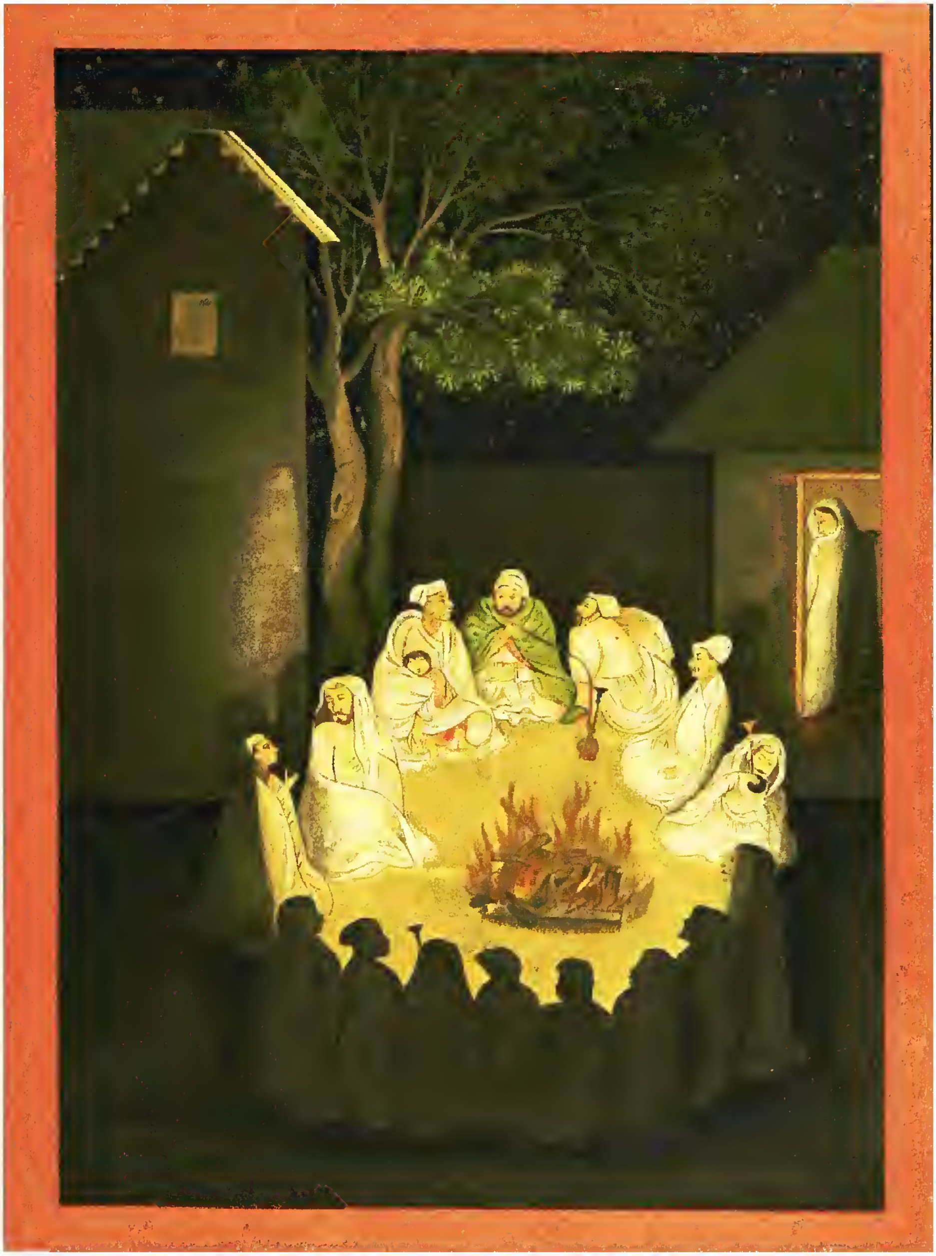
But his impressionism is not merely a blurred vision of natural appearances, as it often is in modern European art. To see with the mind, not merely with the eye; to bring out an essential quality, not the common appearance of things; to give the movement and character in a figure, not only the bone and muscle; to reveal some precious quality or effect in a landscape, not merely physiographical or botanical facts; and, above all, to identify himself with the inner consciousness of the Nature he portrays, and to make manifest the one harmonious law which governs Nature in all her moods,—these are the thoughts which he always keeps uppermost in his mind as soon as he knows how to use his tools with tolerable facility. It is considered of the most

vital importance to train the faculty of mind-seeing from the earliest youth, when impressions are strong and vivid, instead of leaving this development to the end of the academic career, as we usually do in Europe. The oriental artist does not neglect detaïl—witness the wonderful studies of Japanese artists, and those by Indian artists given in Plates LXI., LXII. But the first principle of oriental art-practice is to develop a habit of concentrated thought at the same time as imitative skill is being acquired by practice. In modern European art academies, the creative power usually lies fallow in the most important years of a student's mental development, while the imitative skill is being acquired by a dreary routine of more or less mechanical exercises. In this respect art-teaching only repeats the errors of what we mis-call "classical" education in public schools; but the habit thereby engendered of regarding art as a technical process, rather than a creative faculty, explains to a great extent the archæological critic's standpoint in regard to Indian art.

"Deer-hunting by Night" (Plate LXV.) is another characteristic example of Indian impressionism. It is a landscape with two figures only, a man and a woman, both scantily dressed with a girdle of leaves. The man's head is crowned with a wreath of leaves, and he is armed with bow and arrows; the woman stands behind a bush holding a lighted lantern in one hand and a small bell in the other

PLATE LXVI

TRAVELLERS ROUND A CAMP-FIRE



to attract the attention of a herd of deer close by. The man has just discharged his arrow and shot the buck, while the terrified does scatter in all directions.

The interest of the picture is not, however, in the figures, which, though good in movement, are very weak in drawing, but in the composition and chiaroscuro of the landscape. The night is calm and serene, lighted only by the stars and by the glow of the hunter's lantern which flashes on the bodies of the frightened deer, and throws into relief the rocky ground over which they are wildly running in their efforts to escape. The upper part of the picture is simply but beautifully composed, with a broad, winding river, a thick clump of trees, and the star-lit sky; the dark, heavy foliage massed against the sky, and the silver-grey reflection on the water. Some stunted shrubs and a suggestion of a mountain stream fill up the foreground. The picture is painted in a very low key, but the colour is luminous and full of atmosphere; there is a beautiful sentiment in the whole composition, like Mozart's music in its limpid flowing harmony.

The art of the Moguls was not suppressed by the interdicts of Aurangzîb, and did not die with the Mogul dynasty, for though, like our modern art, it was divorced from religion and regarded by the Court only as a distraction and amusement, it quickly grafted itself on to the older Buddhist and Hindu schools, and thus became truly Indian—a national tradition and part of national culture—

though for the purpose of historical classification we may still call it "Mogul."

Even under the depressing influences of the nineteenth century, Indian art could create things of beauty recalling the strength and spiritual fervour of its former days, and in Northern India there are still painters following the old traditions who, but for the prevailing ignorance of art and the generally vitiated taste of the "educated" classes in India, would be honoured as artists of distinction were under Hindu and Mogul rule.

Plate LXVI., "Travellers round a Camp-fire," is from a modern picture in the Calcutta Art Gallery, which is not unworthy of comparison with the great *genre* works of the old Dutch school; though the methods are different there is the same sincerity in the execution, the same feeling for the poetry of chiaroscuro. A group of travellers are seated round a blazing fire in the compound of a *dharmasala*, a native rest-house. The artist has been attracted by the effect of the firelight in the darkness, and, with the simplicity and directness of true genius, he has given a wonderful "impression" of it—what Whistler would have called a symphony in black, gold, and green. We see some figures of the circle in the full glare of the firelight placed in bold relief against the darkness of the night; others silhouetted against the blaze; the reflection on the walls, the trunks, and lower branches of the trees; the flash on the window and under the eaves of the house; the ghostly shadows, and the

PLATE LXVII

TRAVELLERS ROUND A CAMP-FIRE

Part enlarged to about three times the original size



depths of the all-environing gloom relieved by the glimmer of the starlit sky.

Every one familiar with Indian mofussil life will recognise the truthfulness of the native types given with such intense concentration and dramatic skill. The young man, half in shadow, telling a story; the old man with a sleeping child on his lap, and the two old men with whom he is conversing—one smoking a hookah, the other resting with his hand under his chin, are all masterpieces of characteristic drawing.

Plates LXVIII. and LXIX. are also modern pictures: they give an aspect of Indian art which is more familiar, for here we have the daylight and the full strength of an Indian artist's palette when he revels in the glow and warmth of tropical sunshine. The first is an unfinished picture, and, besides its beautiful sentiment and charm of colour, is especially interesting for revealing the artist's technical methods.

Three young and high-born Indian ladies, in the seclusion of the zanana garden, are taking refreshments under the shade of trees on the margin of a lake. Their attendants stand respectfully behind at a distance. Unobserved and at their ease, the ladies throw aside their upper garments; they are cooling their feet in the water, and conversing gaily. Their skin is as delicately fair as the colour of the tea-rose, and their features pure and noble—the kind of beauty that Botticelli loved to paint. Their attitudes, suggesting the free and happy non-

chalance of youth, are contrasted with the restrained and respectful demeanour of the servants who are bringing refreshments.

The forms of the trees are painted in with great strength and sense of decorative effect. The vivid contrasts of pure colour, laid on uncompromisingly without softening or half-tones, give the warmth and brightness of an Indian atmosphere, and help to sustain the note of youthful freshness and enjoyment struck in the composition of the principal figures.

"A Music-party," Plate LXIX., is an example of the popular art of the present day, founded on the old traditions, which has nearly succumbed to the debasing influences of modern Indian life. There is an artistic quality in this picture which, in spite of the crudeness of the drawing, makes it infinitely more delightful than any of the Anglicised and commercialised Indian art, sometimes more sophisticated, but always insincere, and therefore worthless, which is supplanting it.

Like the pure melody of an old folk-song, it is a true creation of national sentiment, of the poetic impulse which flows spontaneously from the heart of a people inspired by the joy of life and love of beauty. In the previous illustrations we have seen how an Indian artist shows the "gloom of gloom"; here we have the "sunshine of sunshine," given with the same pure delight with which the lark trills his song of joy in the high heavens on a summer morning. The figures in

PLATE LXVIII

IN THE ZANANA GARDEN



this picture are by no means attractive types, or very deeply studied as to character; but their glowing draperies and the gay colours of the musical instruments, together with the pearly tones of the marble and the bright hues of the flowers, serve the purpose of the artist—to express the beauty and the gladness of the radiant Indian sunlight.

And, just as in Indian music there are no complicated harmonies, but a subtle flow of pure intensive melody, so in painting, too, the Indian artist eschews strong shadows and broken colours, producing an effect of light and atmosphere by the perfect rhythm of his colour-music.

In all of these paintings, though the art is entirely spontaneous and unaffected, the very Indian qualities of infinite patience and perfect self-control are strongly manifested. Patience unlimited is bestowed upon detail apparently the most insignificant which the artist thinks necessary, but everything is rigorously excluded which he thinks foreign to his purpose. There is no self-advertisement, no cheap effects to attract the applause of the ignorant, no vulgar trickery or playing to the gallery. This restraint and self-control the inartistic mind, accustomed to the loud self-assertion and aggressive realism of common modern painting, often mistakes for defective power of expression.

A Japanese writer of the eighteenth century, quoted by Dr. Anderson, gives a very keen criticism of the realistic tendency of modern European art. " It is the fault of foreign pictures

that they dive too deeply into realities, and preserve many details that were better suppressed. . . . Such works are but as groups of words. The Japanese picture should aspire to be a poem of form and colour."[1]

It is just in this different idea of realism and different outlook upon nature that we find the gulf which separates Eastern thought and Eastern art from Western. The difference, which the European and Anglicised Indian attribute to defective technical powers or undeveloped intellect, is really due to a different intellectual atmosphere and a different artistic temperament, created by the different answers which East and West give to the question—what is reality?

It is chiefly because the modern European usually refuses to recognise anything which is not evident to his five known senses that he finds the difference so irreconcileable and the gulf so impassable. The Indian artist lives in a world of his own imagination, where the stolid Anglo-Saxon is unable to follow him; but, until the Western pedagogue brought Indian culture into contempt and stifled the inherited artistic instincts of Indian youth with his own pedantic formularies, the Indian artist found his traditional methods were perfectly adequate for obtaining that response from his public which every artist needs.

It is one of the characteristics of a healthy national art that the artist has no need of vulgar

[1] "Pictorial Arts of Japan," vol. ii., p. 242.

PLATE LXIX

A MUSIC PARTY



extraneous effects to make himself appreciated by his public. He is the exponent of national art-culture, not a specialist shut up in a narrow domain of knowledge from which the world at large is excluded. He, therefore, can be sure that a suggestion of his own thought-impressions will evoke a response from his public, just as a note of music finds a response in every wire tuned to the same pitch through which the vibration passes. Relying on this knowledge of sympathetic response in his public, he develops his representation of the natural facts and phenomena which form the framework of his art just to the point at which he knows it will communicate to others the exact impression which exists in his own mind, and does not attempt a laboured and superfluous explanation of irrevelant facts. The imagination of the public he is addressing supplies the complement of the imagination of the artist.

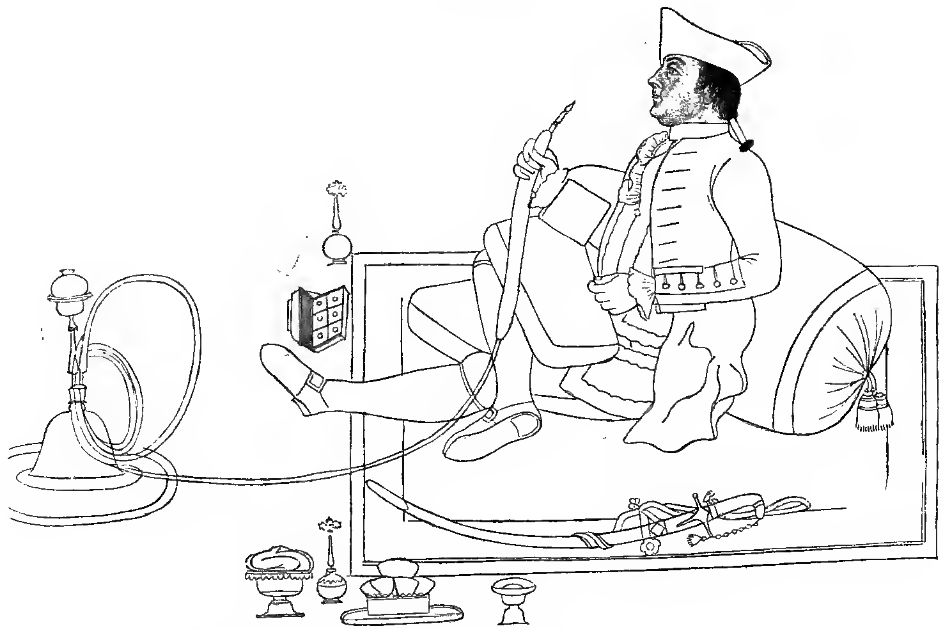
Since the pernicious principles of the Italian Renaissance, the bigotry of Puritanism, and the pedantry of pseudo-classical education combined with modern commercialism to destroy the national art of Europe, the public has demanded from the artist not imagination and ideas, but facts—archæological, historical, biographical or otherwise, relevant or irrelevant—only facts which it can understand. When an imaginative artist appears he must now address an unimaginative public through a go-between, an art-critic, who explains as best he can in words what the artist intends to explain

with his pencil, brush, or chisel, so that society, which does not like to confess itself Philistine, may talk glibly of what it does not know or feel.

Art limps badly upon these literary crutches, and in the artificial conditions of modern life there is no longer that mutual understanding between the artist and his public which existed when art was a national language of much greater intellectual and moral influence than mere book-learning. The curse of our false classicism, so utterly inconsistent with the true spirit of ancient culture, now hangs heavy upon the national art of India, and the educated Indian, trained in the sordid and squalid atmosphere of Indian universities, becomes completely out of touch with his own national artistic thought, and attributes to Indian art the defects which should properly be ascribed to his own lack of artistic development.

The next three illustrations, Plates LXX.-I.-II., show how Indian artists in the early days of British rule, before schools of art were established to teach them what they knew far better themselves, were employed by their European masters, just as their ancestors had been employed in the Court of the Great Mogul. This occupation has been lost to them by the development of photographic science, and by the changed conditions of Anglo-Indian life, which give greater facilities for employing European portrait-painters, but have certainly not raised the standard of public taste. At the same time the spread of the popular belief in the

PLATE LXX



PORTRAIT OF AN ANGLO-INDIAN OF THE GEORGIAN PERIOD

(*From a drawing by a native artist in the Calcutta Art Gallery*)

inferiority of Indian art, which English education does so much to foster, has taken away from Indian portrait-painters the patronage of their wealthier countrymen.

These extremely interesting drawings of Anglo-Indian *burra-sahibs* and *mem-sahibs* living in Bengal in the Georgian period were presented to the Calcutta Art Gallery by Mr. Abanindro Nath Tagore. They were found in the possession of a native artist of Calcutta, one of whose ancestors, Gulab Lal, was employed by the Mogul Court about the year 1719, in the reign of Muhammad Shah. Though lacking the wonderful *finesse* of the best Mogul miniaturists, they are of high artistic merit, and give very amusing glimpses into the Anglo-Indian life of that time.

They were probably executed by one of the same family who was working at Murshidabad in the employ of the Nawab Nazim, of Bengal, about 1782.[1] The living representative of this artist family, when I discovered him, had been obliged, from want of encouragement for his art, to give up the profession of a miniature painter, and to look

[1] I am indebted to Mr. H. E. A. Cotton for the following note, which may help to establish the identity of the persons depicted: "In 1781 the Nawab Nazim, at the request of the Governor-General in Council, replaced all the principal native *forjdars*, *thannadars*, and other Nizamat officers by Europeans, but the names of these new arrivals are not given in Walsh's 'History of Moorshedabad.' Mr. E. O. Ives was collector at Moorshedabad (Berhampore) in 1784. From 1773 to 1779 one Martin was Resident at the Nazim's Court. In 1779 Sir John Hadley D'Oyley was appointed. Possibly the portraits of Sir John Macpherson and Stables, members of Hastings' Council, might be amongst them."

for more remunerative employment in drawing patterns for a European firm which imported Manchester piece-goods. He has now an appointment in the Calcutta School of Art.

The condition of most other descendants of the great artists of the Mogul Courts is an equally painful commentary on the decadence of fine art in India. There are still a few at Delhi and Agra who find employment in photographic establishments, or in painting the well-known miniatures on ivory which are bought by tourists as Indian "curiosities." A few of the Indian princes continue to employ court painters, though it is generally considered unprogressive to do so. If they take any practical interest in their art it nearly always means that the painters are sent to Europe, or to an Indian school of art, so that all the Indian artistic traditions which they have inherited may be uprooted.

There is, however, a certain amount of popular traditional pictorial art still alive in Northern India, of which the examples given in Plates LII. LXIX. are typical. It is thoroughly true and genuine art, and, if educated Indians were to take an intelligent interest in it, it would form the surest and best foundation on which to build up the revival of Indian painting. But it is to be feared that, until Indian art recovers its lost prestige, few of them would face the ignorant ridicule which such a departure from the accepted views of Indian fine art would bring upon them.



PORTRAITS OF ANGLO-INDIANS OF THE GEORGIAN PERIOD
(*From drawings by a native artist in the Calcutta Art Gallery*)

CHAPTER IV

THE FUTURE OF INDIAN ART

IN the foregoing brief explanation of Indian sculpture and painting I have endeavoured to indicate, by the aid of some of those masterpieces, unfortunately few, which have been salved from the wreckage of a great civilisation and culture, the principal psychological impulses through which the ideals of Indian fine art have been created. We have seen, first, an epoch inspired by intense religious fervour, analogous to the Romanesque and Gothic epochs of European art, in which the Indian people, dissatisfied with abstract ideals, and yearning for tangible symbols of their spiritual desires and beliefs, began by using the means provided for them by an alien faith and art—just as the early Christians first adopted the art of pagan Rome. Gradually the national consciousness, building on this foundation, evolved its own artistic ideals—ideals as different from the original types as Gothic art differs from Roman—and thus created that Indian art which gave it its inspiration to the whole æsthetic thought of Asia.

The illustrations of some of the masterpieces of that great epoch of religious art, and the explanation given, have been, I hope, sufficient to show that the ideals thus realised were not, as archæologists aver, the result of the feeble efforts of undeveloped powers to imitate the degenerate types of the Hellenic school, but original, imaginative creations which, rightly understood, are worthy to rank with the noblest artistic creations of the West.

After many centuries, when the spiritual fervour which created the splendid art of Ajanta, Ellora, and Borôbudûr had spent itself, religion in India, as in other countries, began to cloak its own deformities in hollow shows and ceremonies; a corrupt priesthood finding in the misuse of man's most spiritual gifts a specious disguise for a false religion and an easy means of quieting the national conscience. Art, too, always a true reflection of man's spiritual nature, losing its vital forces, began to substitute for original creative energy a mechanical repetition of æsthetic formularies—just as the priest listlessly revolved his praying-wheel, and mumbled endless *mantras* the meaning of which had long been forgotten.

The next great wave of religious feeling brought with it a puritanical movement in art. The followers of Muhammad, and perhaps those of Sankaracharya, as a protest against degraded idolatry and superstitious mummery, banished the fine arts from their places of worship; con-

PLATE LXXII



PORTRAITS OF ANGLO-INDIANS OF THE GEORGIAN PERIOD

(*From drawings by a native artist in the Calcutta Art Gallery*)

fusing cause with effect, and vainly hoping, like the Puritans in Europe, that by divorcing art from religion human nature might be purged of hypocrisy, worldliness, and superstition.

But the zeal of these ascetic religious reformers, though it had a most disastrous effect upon Indian sculpture, did not suppress the instinct for artistic creation, which has always accompanied great national religious and intellectual impulses. The artistic genius of the Moguls, deprived of the sculptor's chisel, realised itself in a noble, idealistic architecture—of which the Taj Mahal may be regarded as the consummation—and, under the enlightened patronage of Akbar, a secular school of Indian painting arose, which, though it lacked the high spiritual purpose which inspired the old religious schools, nevertheless deserves the appreciation and careful study of all artists for its perfect sincerity and high technical distinction—qualities which are conspicuously wanting in the degenerate Anglicised art of the present day.

I think my illustrations will show that when the Indian artist finds himself on the same plane of thought he is just as capable as the European of drawing the human figure correctly, and of making true transcripts from Nature. The Mogul school, though naturalistically inclined, has this in common with the idealistic art of the Buddhist and Brahmanical epochs, that it always kept in view the highest aim of the artist—to penetrate

the soul of things, and to bring us into closer relation with Nature's eternal verities.

But when art gave up its birthright as the ethical teacher and spiritual helper of mankind, only to minister to the vanity and self-indulgence of the wealthy and indolent; when man ceased to use his highest creative faculties in the daily worship of his Creator, the Decadence, miscalled in Europe the Renaissance, had already begun. India's loss of spiritual power is the measure of the degradation of her art.

In my second chapter I have attempted to describe the anomalous state of the fine arts in India since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The unimaginative Anglo-Saxon succeeded the imaginative Mogul in the sovereignty of India, and the people, distracted by long years of anarchy, accepted the change gladly. We have fulfilled our duties as policemen, and take a just pride in the organisation, peace, and security which we have substituted for chaos, bloodshed, and general brigandage. It is not a small thing, as Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff said in one of his Elgin addresses, to keep the peace between 250,000,000 of men. But it was inevitable that our success in this direction should lead to even greater responsibilities being thrust upon us. The East came to learn the wisdom of the West, and *nolens volens* we have been compelled to undertake the much more difficult duties of teacher and spiritual adviser as well as those of policeman.

The critic who endeavoured to form a just estimate of the results we have achieved in the two former capacities would naturally take into consideration the present condition of art in India, for as a symptom of intellectual, moral, and spiritual progress, the condition of a national art is a more certain guide than any blue books or statistics. Such a critic would doubtless be inclined to regard the degeneration and decay of Indian art, which have certainly been much more rapid under the peace and security of British rule than under the most chaotic period of native government, as a very unfavourable indication—and, so far as it goes, it may be regarded as such. But there can be no doubt that this seeming inexplicable decay of Indian art, in spite of the blessings of order and settled government which we have conferred upon the country, is due to exceptional administrative difficulties, and to causes which, in process of time, will probably be removed. One of the most conspicuous of these causes is the pernicious example we have held up in Anglo-Indian art, more especially in the architecture of public buildings—always the outward visible sign of the inner civic consciousness.

If art is the mirror of the age, it must always be humiliating to any artistic Englishman to contemplate our miserable, make-believe Gothic and make-believe classic cathedrals, churches, colleges, schools, offices of state, and historical monuments, and compare their banality, ugliness and squalor,

with the dignity, strength, and greatness revealed in the splendid memorials of the Mogul Empire. It must be equally humiliating to any artistic Indian to see his educated fellow-countrymen imposed upon by these "imposing" structures, and using them as models instead of the great masterpieces of their own national architecture. They are indeed fitting symbols of many departmental muddles and make-believes.

But when all these things are seen in their true perspective the future historian of British India will be able to find, even in our blunders, sufficient evidence of high endeavour and moral earnestness. We live in an age of transition, and in India the ideals of two great civilisations are now in the melting-pot—the dross will accumulate on the surface, but when that is cleared away the pure gold that is in both will be found beneath. The art of present and past generations of Anglo-Indians reveals the dross; we may hope that the art of the new India which is forming will show the precious metal.

At a time when our own national education was miserably defective, and when our own national art had lost all its vitality and sincerity, we undertook to hold up the torch of European civilisation and progress to the East. And of the two statesmen, Bentinck and Macaulay, who laid the foundations of Western education in India, the first considered Indian art so lightly that he was only diverted from selling the Taj Mahal for the value

of its marbles because the proceeds of a test auction of materials from the Agra palace proved unsatisfactory, and the second did not hesitate to declare his conviction, after an absurdly inadequate acquaintance with India, that the whole of Indian and Arabic literature was not worth a single bookshelf of a good European library. *Tempora mutantur*, and it is now largely due to the work and appreciation of European scholars and men of letters that New India has been aroused to undertake for herself researches into the priceless stores of oriental literature which had been so long neglected. What we have not yet accomplished is the proper application of our improved knowledge of Indian culture and civilisation to the administrative work of the empire, especially in matters of education. The great problems of education in India, which should command Great Britain's highest statesmanship and best intellect, have generally, since Macaulay's time, been relegated to the pedagogic specialist, often narrow and provincial in his views, and as a rule entirely out of touch with real Indian life and thought. The statesman has not yet appeared to organise an Indian university, affording to Indian youth the best fruits of both Eastern and Western culture, and fit to be a successor of the great universities of Buddhist and Hindu rule in stimulating the national artistic genius—that creative power of the people in the exercise of which will always be found one of the surest guarantees for national prosperity and contentment.

In a recent article upon public school education in England Mr. A. C. Benson condemned—

"the intellectual tyranny that sits enthroned in the centre, a monopoly sustained by specialists, a despotic, inelastic, devastating theory. It is the foe of liberality of thought, mental expansion, intellectual progress, because it substitutes for the intellectual spirit a small and minute image of its own devising. . . . For the majority of boys the classical system, simply because it is the rigid application of a very special subject to the mental needs of an infinite variety of minds, is not only no education at all, but a deliberate sterilisation of the intellectual seed-plot, a perverse maltreatment of the ingenuous mind."

These words, *mutatis mutandis*, may be taken as a very true description of our system of higher education in India; only the evil of it is there intensely aggravated, because Indian students are practically denied any other means of education except the university courses. Our universities have always stood, in the eyes of India, as representative of the best light and leading of the West; yet the disabilities and injuries which they, as exponents of all learning recognised by the State, inflict upon Indian art and industry are probably without a parallel in the history of civilisation; for not only do they refuse to allow art its legitimate place in the mental and moral equipment of Indian youth—the average Indian graduate, with all his remarkable assimilative

powers, is often less developed artistically than a Pacific Islander—but, by practically excluding all Indian artists of the old hereditary professions from the honours and emoluments of State employment, they lower the status of Indian art and give a wholly unjustifiable preference to the art imported from Europe, which comes with the prestige of a presumed higher order of civilisation. And after prolonged discussion of educational reform, with the experience of fifty years behind them, Indian universities have lately resolved to shut their doors still more decidedly upon Indian art.

It is only necessary to compare the present position of Indian artists with that of their forefathers to see the evil our whole administrative system works upon art in India. In the time of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, the best artists became grandees of the Court and sometimes intimate friends of the Emperor himself. In Rajputana, also, under Hindu rule, painters and architects held dignified positions at Court; and, besides extremely liberal pecuniary rewards, they were often given special honours and grants of land. In the Imperial Library at Calcutta there is preserved a Persian manuscript giving the names of the designers and chief constructors of the Taj Mahal at Agra and the salaries they received. The three principal designers were each paid a thousand rupees a month; another received eight hundred; six others four hundred, and nine others from two hundred to four hundred

a month. These salaries would represent a considerably larger sum in present Indian currency. But the descendants of these men in India, who practise their profession now with little less ability, though their opportunities for exercising it are miserably few, are considered well paid at thirty, forty, or sixty rupees a month: and what Indian artist under our administration has ever received any sort of honour or reward except a paltry and miserably designed medal at an exhibition, for which he is sometimes called upon to pay?

In the design and construction of a great modern monument, the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta, which, had it not been in an academic European style, might have justified the title bestowed upon it, "The Taj of the Twentieth Century," several lacs of rupees, mostly subscribed by Indians, will be paid to European architects and sculptors; but, though there are many efficient Indian master-builders and excellent sculptors and ornamental designers still available, not one will be employed, except in a subordinate capacity, to copy the paper patterns of the European designers, and to fix up sculptures made in London studios which must be totally irrelevant to Indian art and Indian life.

It is true that we have founded Colleges of Engineering, and that Indian universities give engineering diplomas which enable Indians who have passed the prescribed tests to practise the profession of an architect and designer without

any architectural or artistic training. It must also be said that we have established four schools of art for a population of 300,000,000, in which students who have failed to qualify for Government employment through the University may learn the theory and practice of the fine arts as they are taught in London and Paris. But these are only samples of those administrative make-believes which are infinitely more harmful in their influence than a policy of absolute *laissez-faire.*

If we adopted a purely Philistine attitude, declared that our mission was to set an example of what we are proud to call plain, practical, British common sense, we should at least have been consistent and straightforward. Or if we avowed that our task in India was only to protect the down-trodden pariah; to remove the barriers by which a selfish and corrupt hierarchy has prevented the intellectual and social advancement of the lower orders; to free the ryot from the bondage of the *sowcar*; to purify the administration and to hold the scales of justice even,—we might perhaps view with a quiet conscience the continuous degradation of Indian art, which we do next to nothing to arrest.

But this is not our attitude. We pose as apostles of higher culture, as patrons of art and letters, and exponents of a superior order of civilisation; and by so doing we have persuaded educated Indians and the aristocracy of the country, who are the principal patrons of art, to

leave their artistic consciences in our keeping, to adopt the models we approve of, and to aim at the ideals at which we profess to aim.

We should not, then, introduce into Indian civic life a standard of art immeasurably inferior to its own—the contractor's art and the jerry-builder are our only æsthetic importations; we should not affect to consider art as a proper moral influence for Indian jails and reformatories and deny it to university students; and, if we argue that the indifference to Indian art of the India we have educated is a proof that it does not really interpret the Indian mind, we should at least be sure that we are better able to interpret it ourselves. You cannot know a people's mind if you do not understand their art.

We certainly do, as a rule, take a more sincere interest in Indian art than most "educated" Indians, but it is always a purely academic and superficial interest; and it is quite natural, and almost inevitable, that it should be so. Many English and Anglo-Indian drawing-rooms have more or less unpractical Indian furniture, and various useless ornaments which we call Indian curiosities. At times we make spasmodic and ill-considered attempts to encourage Indian art by holding exhibitions for work of the same class. These things simply show how far we are from appreciating the vital points of the question, how little we understand the Indian mind ourselves.

For this is Indian art—spurious and make-believe, like our official architecture—with all the virtue, all the spirituality, all the love and worship, all that has made it great and true in the past, taken out of it. Indian art was born in the pilgrim's camp and nurtured by the highest spiritual ideals; it can never thrive in the sickly, artificial atmosphere of the European drawing-room. We have driven it from the great cities of India, it has no part in our civic life, and its last refuge is now in the villages and towns remote from European influence.

But this last refuge will always be its surest stronghold; when art in Europe gets back to the villages the real Renaissance will have begun. In the villages of India the true artistic spirit still survives, and, if we and educated Indians would know what true Indian art is, we must go there, where the heart of India beats, where the voices of her dead myriads still are heard, and learn a lesson that neither London nor Paris can teach. A short time ago I drew attention, in a monograph on the stone-carving of Bengal,[1] to some modern architectural decoration, just as beautiful in feeling and execution as the carving of a medieval Gothic cathedral, done by Orissa sculptors, the direct descendants of those who built and sculptured the famous temple of the Sun-god, already referred to (p. 146). For the last twenty or thirty years some of them have been carving the decoration of

[1] Bengal Secretarial Book depôt, 1906.

a temple at Jajpur, the ancient capital of the province; their wages, fourpence a day, are being paid by a religious mendicant who has spent his whole life in begging for funds for this purpose.

When I suggested that wealthy Bengalis would do better in having such art as this in their houses rather than tenth-rate commercial Italian statuary, and that Calcutta would gain in many ways if we substituted real Indian sculpture, conceived in this spirit, for foolish Gothic and classic imitations (ten or twenty times more costly), *The Statesman*, one of the principal European newspapers of Calcutta, applauded the taste of educated Indians, declaring that it was highly commendable and gratifying to those who believed that the mission of Europe was to awaken Asia and lift her up to the Western level of culture.

"Until Indian art," it asserted sententiously, "has mastered the cardinal secret of simplicity; until the Indian artists have begun to understand the meaning of large effects; until, abandoning mere amplification, they prove capable of a conception of an organic whole, the products of native art are bound to remain in the state of arrested growth they have been all these thousands of years."

The abysmal ignorance of Indian art-history implied in the last sentence may be pardoned, for it is not confined to the editorial columns of Anglo-Indian newspapers; but what are these "large effects," these Parnassian heights, seemingly inaccessible to ourselves, which we would

fain make others climb? When we have succeeded in creating in India, either by our own exertions or through the Indian intellect, anything ethically or æsthetically as great as a medieval Gothic cathedral we may begin to aim at something higher. But all such academic recipes, relating either to art, architecture, or general education, are just as vain and useless as the *mantras* of uncomprehended mysteries the Tibetan Lama drones as he twirls his praying-wheel.

Change there must be in Indian art; that is both inevitable and necessary, for there is no real life in an art which never changes. But the change must come from the quickening, not from the deadening, of the creative faculties; from the stimulating of thought and the strenuous upholding of higher ideals, not from the substitution of one academic formula for another.

The strength of a living art is shown in its power of assimilating foreign influences; but when it is weak such influences kill it. No great living art can or will surround itself with a ring-fence of exclusiveness, and Indian art has never done so at any period of its history. But it is cruel to bind it hand and foot, to give free ingress to all the evil influences of modernism, and to do nothing whatever to bring in the good ones. This has been the effect upon Indian art of our present educational system, and of our whole artistic policy in India.

In every department of original thought, the

poverty of modern India, compared with the great epochs of its former history, reveals the effect of our "sterilisation of the intellectual seed-plot," but nowhere is this more evident than in the field of fine art. The schools of art, in their teaching of painting and sculpture, continue even to the present day to uphold the Anglo-Indian dogma that India has always failed in the higher expression of artistic thought, except when, as Mr. Vincent Smith put it, "Indian art was held in Græco-Roman leading-strings." Consequently, the whole paraphernalia of European art-academies—the drawing copies, casts from "the antique," the five orders of classic architecture, Gothic mouldings, etc., etc., have been imported wholesale from Europe, to form the basis of the Indian art-student's training; and, at the same time, it has been held to be totally unnecessary, if not demoralising, for them to study the principles and methods of Indian painting and sculpture.

The fact that the best students of these schools, during the fifty years the system has been in force, have never, with the rarest exceptions, produced any original work which would be considered tenth-rate in Europe, has never suggested that the system is wholly inartistic and educationally false and unsound. Departmentally, the failure of it is so much more satisfactorily explained by the theory of the inferiority of the Indian intellect, and the difficulty of effecting any radical reform in it has been increased tenfold by the acquiescence of

practically all those Indians who call themselves "educated" (or those who have entered, or attempted to enter the University) in this theory of their peculiar constitutional defect.

The rank materialism which is the basis of the modern Indian university system tends to produce in the Indian mind the same attitude towards art that is characteristic of the European university man. In this view, so contrary to all the laws of Nature, and all the experience of the human race, art is one of those luxuries which may be enjoyed when other intellectual, and all bodily, wants are satisfied; but, at the same time, it is to be taken as the most easily dispensed with of all intellectual stimulants, and as having no practical bearing on the intellectual growth or life of the average human being.

It is enough for the Indian undergraduate that it counts for nothing in the university examinations, and in after-life he is quite content to accept the common formularies which regulate the prevailing fashions as representing his correct attitude towards art. The contrast of the profound culture of the ancient Indian universities with this superficiality and Philistine dogmatism sufficiently explains the altered conditions of art in India.

The art which truly reflects the fictitious culture of Indian universities and the teaching of Anglo-Indian art-schools, is exhibited in the paintings of the late Ravi Vurma, who is the fashionable artist of modern India for those Indians who do not

ignore Indian art altogether. Though not trained in a school of art, all his methods have been based on the academic nostrums of Anglo-Indian schools, fine-art societies, and art critics. It is difficult to understand whether the popularity his works have gained is to be attributed more to the common realistic trickery which he has borrowed from European painters or to his choice of Indian subjects. But certain it is that his pictures invariably manifest a most painful lack of the poetic faculty in illustrating the most imaginative Indian poetry and allegory; and this cardinal sin is not atoned for by any kind of technical distinction in the execution.

A very just critique of Ravi Vurma's art is given by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, one of the very few Indians who have an understanding and appreciation of the art of their own country, in a recent number of *The Modern Review*:

"Theatrical conceptions, want of imagination, and lack of Indian feeling, in the treatment of sacred and epic Indian subjects, are Ravi Vurma's fatal faults. No offence can be greater than the treatment of serious or epic subjects without dignity, and Ravi Vurma's gods and heroes are men cast in a very common mould, who find themselves in situations for which they have not a proper capacity. Unforgivable, too, is the lack of a spontaneous expression of individual or national idiosyncrasy; for his pictures are such as any European student could paint, after perusal of the necessary literature and a superficial study of

Indian life. It was not for this that art was given to India; not that India might hold a smoky mirror to the art of other men, but rather that she might open yet another window whence we may look upon 'the foam of perilous seas and fairy lands forlorn.'"

Artistic taste in India, like artistic taste in Europe, has degenerated from a high intellectual faculty into a common fashion; and in India the fashion is not dictated or influenced by the preferences of a specially cultured class, but by certain conventional canons founded on the pride of the ruling race and on the assumption that Indian art has always been inferior to European.

This false premiss has given to every educated European in India a position of authority in art matters to which he is not often entitled. It has also given an immensely exaggerated importance, augmented by the high official patronage always bestowed upon them, to the annual art exhibitions organised by Anglo-Indian *dilettanti*. For though the technical standard of Anglo-Indian amateur art, judged by modern European canons, is a very high one, there has never been any serious purpose in it, and an Indian artist who does not see things, or pretend to see them, through European spectacles has not the slightest chance of recognition by the judges who make the awards which are solemnly telegraphed from one end of India to the other.

So, while these societies have become the arbiters

of public taste, and while Anglo-Indians have prided themselves on their liberal patronage of the fine arts, an art much greater than theirs, of which they take no cognisance, has been dying for want of sustenance outside their very doors. And if an Indian artist should attract the attention of a benevolent Anglo-Indian, or of one of his own countrymen, the only thought which will occur to either of them is to send him to Europe or to an Indian School of Art, to be drilled in the European way of seeing things—a still surer method of extinguishing whatever artistic individuality the recipient of this well-intentioned patronage may possess.

The unreasoning belief in the efficacy of European processes for reviving Indian art is still so strong among educated Indians that when, a few years ago, a miscellaneous collection of European pictures in the Calcutta Art Gallery was sold to provide funds for purchasing Indian pictures and sculpture, the journal which is the chief spokesman of the so-called *Swadeshi* (or national) party in Calcutta with sublime inconsistency assailed me for nearly a week in the best Bengali journalese for my share in the transaction, and, *more suo*, attributed to the Government a sinister intention of suppressing higher education in art.

It may very well be said, if this faith is so strong and Indian art so weak, then surely Macaulay was right after all, and we must go on firmly in the same path, leaving the old India, effete and ex-

PLATE LXXIII

KACHA AND DEVÂJÂNI

A fresco painting by Abanindro Nath Tagore



hausted, to die a natural death, believing that the new India, strengthened with our strength and inspired by more robust ideals, will in time create a new art more worthy of itself.

If, indeed, the fires which kindled Indian art should have sunk so low that they could be extinguished by the intellectual arrogance of a Macaulay or the cold contempt of ignorant Philistinism—if mere administrative blunders could entirely suppress them—we might fairly think it a matter of small importance for India to attempt to keep her art-traditions alive. There is a new spirit abroad in India to-day; the West has roused the East from its lethargic torpor, and in that new spirit we may rest content and find our complete justification. But it would be a fatal error if we deluded ourselves into the belief that the spirit of Indian civilisation, which only three centuries ago—a few moments to the oriental mind—ruled over one of the great empires of the world, will now be supplanted by the spirit of the West; that India will forget entirely her great thought-heritage and be content to let purely Western ideas govern her future destiny.

There is a new spirit abroad in the land, but we must not shut our eyes to the fact that, if the East is awakening to the errors of her own civilisation, it has also become more fully alive to the deficiencies of ours. It is a spirit of searching inquiry and comparison, and even the India we have educated has not now that implicit faith in the superiority

of Western teachers which it had half a century ago. And if we, instead of meeting this new spirit with an earnest desire to learn as well as to teach, wrap ourselves up in the pride of power and place, the gulf which separates East and West—a gulf which our own ignorance helps to dig—will inevitably grow wider and deeper.

New India has at last found an artist, Mr. Abanindro Nath Tagore, to show us something of its real mind, and it is significant that it is revealing itself in a continuity of the old artistic thought, a new expression of former convictions. It is impossible to give here anything like an adequate illustration of his work as a whole, but the four plates LXXIII. to VI., will suffice to show that a real artist has come to pick up the broken threads of Indian pictorial tradition.

It is significant, also, that Mr. Tagore, though well educated in the European sense, never came within the depressing intellectual environment of an Indian university, and very speedily gave up the European routine of technical training to which his artistic inclinations at first led him. Having thus escaped the Scylla and Charybdis on which so many Indian art-students have been wrecked, he devoted himself to a close study of the collection of Indian pictures which I was then beginning to make for the Calcutta Art Gallery, and this collection has been the guiding influence in his artistic development, although in matters of technique he

PLATE LXXIV

THE SIDDHAS OF THE UPPER AIR



adopted a compromise between Indian and European methods.

Mr. Tagore has probably not yet arrived at the full development of all his powers, either in technique or in artistic expression, but his influence on the future of Indian painting is likely to be far-reaching. Naturally, being well versed both in Sanskrit and Persian literature, he seeks inspiration from the great epics of India, and from the poems of Kalidasa and Omar Khayyam. And, being gifted with a fine imaginative faculty, he does not, like his predecessor, Ravi Vurma, make khitmutghars pose for the heroes of the Mahâbhârata, ayahs for Radha or the lovely Sîtâ, and ugly coolie women for the *rakshinis*—the dread demonesses of the primeval forest—but gives us a true interpretation of Indian spirituality and an insight into that higher world, the fairyland of Eastern poetry and romance which Eastern thought has created.

Plate LXXIII. is one of Mr. Tagore's earliest works, an essay in Indian *fresco buono*, which shows at the same time his technical deficiencies and his rare power of artistic expression. The allegorical story of Kacha and Devâjâni which it illustrates is told in the Mahâbhârata:[1]

"There was a supreme contest between the gods and *asuras* for the sovereignty of the three worlds. To control the sacrifices by which the victory would be decided, the gods chose as their

[1] See vol. i., Roy's translation, pp. 232–40.

priest the sage Vrihaspati; the *asuras* appointed Sukra as theirs. Sukra knew the secret of reviving the dead, and by his wonderful science restored to life all the enemies of the gods as soon as they were slain. The gods, in despair, begged the eldest son of Vrihaspati to present himself to Sukra as a disciple, so that he might learn from him the mighty secret. Kacha consented, and, after taking the vow of discipleship, was received by Sukra. He speedily ingratiated himself into his master's favour, and by singing, dancing, and music won the heart of his fair daughter, Devâjâni.

"When five hundred years of his discipleship had passed, the *asuras* discovered Kacha's intention, and, finding him alone in the woods, tending his preceptor's kine, they slew him, hacked his body to pieces, and gave them to be devoured by wolves and jackals. Sukra, at Devâjâni's entreaty, revived him by his magic science, but soon afterwards Kacha was slain again by the *asuras* when he was roaming the forest in search of flowers for the sacrifice. This time they pounded his body into a paste and mixed it with the waters of ocean. But again he was revived by Sukra. Then the *asuras* slew him a third time, and, burning the body, mixed the ashes with the wine which Sukra drank.

"Devâjâni, missing her beloved Kacha, again appealed to her father; but when Sukra exercised his power and found that Kacha was inside his own body, he cried out, 'Oh, Devâjâni, Kacha is within me, and there is no way for his coming out alive except by ripping open my own belly!'

"Touched by Devâjâni's despair, Sukra adopted the only resource left to him—to impart to Kacha

PLATE LXXV



AURANGZÎB EXAMINING THE HEAD OF DARA

his great secret, under a promise that it would be used to restore himself to life as soon as the former was released by Sukra's death. Kacha, beautiful as the full moon, came out of Sukra's belly by ripping it open, and used his newly gained power for the first time in restoring his master to life."

The climax of the story, which is illustrated in Mr. Tagore's fine composition, is when Kacha, at the expiration of his vow of discipleship, prepared to return to the abode of the gods. Devâjâni, reminding him of her devotion to him, begged of him to fix his affections upon her, and to accept her hand in marriage. But Kacha, regarding their relationship as one which made marriage impossible, exhorted her thus:

"O thou of virtuous vows, do not urge me to such a sinful course! O thou of fair eyebrows, be kind unto me! Beautiful one, thou art dearer to me than my preceptor, but the place where thou hast resided in the holy body of Sukra hath also been my abode! Thou art truly my sister; therefore, O slender-waisted one, do not speak thus! Loving one, happily have we passed the days that we have been together. There is perfect sympathy between us. I ask thy leave to return to my abode. Therefore bless me, so that my journey may be safe."

Devâjâni, finding her entreaties useless, cursed Kacha, saying: "Since thou dost refuse to make me thy wife when I implore thee, O Kacha, this knowledge thou hast gained shall bear no fruit."

But Kacha replied:

"Curse me, if it please thee. I have told thee the duty of Rishis. I do not deserve thy curse, O Devâjâni, but yet thou hast cursed me. Since thou hast done this from passion, not from a sense of duty, thy desire shall not be fulfilled. No Rishi's son shall ever take thy hand in marriage. Thou hast said that my knowledge shall not bear fruit. Let it be so! *But in him it shall bear fruit to whom I shall impart it.*"

And Kacha departed to the abode of the gods.

Mr. Tagore has expressed, with wonderful directness and with the simplicity of the highest art, the struggle between passion and duty which is the motive of the story. The true poetry of the composition and the depth of expression more than compensate for his obvious technical shortcomings.

Plate LXXVI. is the first of a series of illustrations which Mr. Tagore has recently undertaken for the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. The subject is taken from the second verse of the first edition of Fitzgerald's English version:

> Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky,
> I heard a voice within the Tavern cry,
> "Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
> Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

Plate LXXIV. is an illustration of Kalidasa's poem, the *Megha-duta* or Cloud-Messenger. The subject of the poem is thus described by H. H. Wilson:

PLATE LXXVI

ILLUSTRATION FOR THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM



"A *yaksha*, or demi-god so-called, and a servant of the Hindu God of Wealth (Kuvera), had incurred the displeasure of his lord by neglecting a garden entrusted to his charge, and allowing it to be injured by the entrance of Airavata, the elephant of Indra, deity of the firmament. As a punishment for this offence, he was condemned to twelve months' banishment from Alaka, the city of the *yakshas*, and consequent separation from his home and wife. The seat of his exile is the mountain Ramagiri, and, upon the opening of the poem, he is supposed to have passed a period of eight months in solitary seclusion. The poem opens at the commencement of the rainy season, when heavy clouds are gathering in the south and proceeding in a northerly course toward the Himalaya Mountains, and the fictitious position of the residence of the *yakshas*. To one of these the distressed demi-god addresses himself, and desires the cloud to waft his sorrows to a beloved and regretted wife. For this purpose he first describes the route which the messenger is to pursue, and this gives the poet an opportunity of alluding to the principal mountains, rivers, temples, etc., that are to be met with on the road from Ramagiri to Ujjain, and thence north to the Himalaya Mountains."

The passage in the poem which Mr. Tagore illustrates :—

> Each lute-armed spirit from thy path retires
> Lest drops ungenial damp thy tuneful wires—

refers to the *siddhas*, pure spirits of the upper air —half human, half divine—who, on the approach

of the dense monsoon clouds, wrap up their musical instruments to protect them from the damp, and retire to their Himalayan retreats.

One of Mr. Tagore's latest compositions, "Aurangzîb examining the Head of Dara," is reproduced in Plate LXXV., and the dramatic power with which he has treated this tragic episode in Mogul history will show the versatility of his art. The crafty bigot, Aurangzîb, after imprisoning his father, Shah Jahan, has at last succeeded in removing the chief impediment to the security of his throne, his eldest brother, Dara Shikoh, by having him despatched in prison. The murdered man's head has been brought to Aurangzîb while he is reclining at ease on a marble bench in the Agra palace. He puts down his Quran and rosary, and, uncovering Dara's head with the tip of his jewelled sword, nonchalantly examines the features of the ghastly trophy, to assure himself that the brother he has supplanted will trouble him no more.

Mr. Tagore is no longer to be regarded as an isolated phenomenon in modern Indian art, for in the last two years, since he has been in temporary charge of the Calcutta School of Art, the latter has become the centre of a new school of Indian painting, founded on the traditions of the old, which already gives fair hopes that a real renaissance in Indian fine art is beginning. The two plates, Nos. LXXVII.-VIII., which are reproductions of works by Mr. Nanda Lal Bose and Mr. Surendra

PLATE LXXVII



SATI

"Life of my life, Death's bitter sword
Hath severed us like a broken word:
Rent us in twain who are but one . . .
Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?"

SAROJINI NAIDU.

Nath Ganguly, two of the most promising of Mr. Tagore's pupils, must conclude my illustrations of Indian fine art, ancient and modern.

The first, Plate LXXVII., entitled "Sati," by Mr. Nanda Lal Bose, reveals to us the tragedy of Indian wifehood, when the young widow, breathing a silent prayer in her last lament, which Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has voiced in her beautiful lines, prepares to throw herself upon the funeral pyre of her dead husband. Mr. Bose, in his expressive figure, has caught all the fine feeling of the poetry.

The last Plate, No. LXXVIII., "The Flight of Lakshman Sen," is an extremely able work by Mr. Surendra Nath Ganguly, illustrating an incident in the history of Bengal. The last representative of a long line of Hindu kings, after his defeat by the Pathans, seeks refuge in flight. The decrepit figure of the monarch is seen crawling down his palace stairs, at the foot of which a barge is waiting to aid him in his escape.

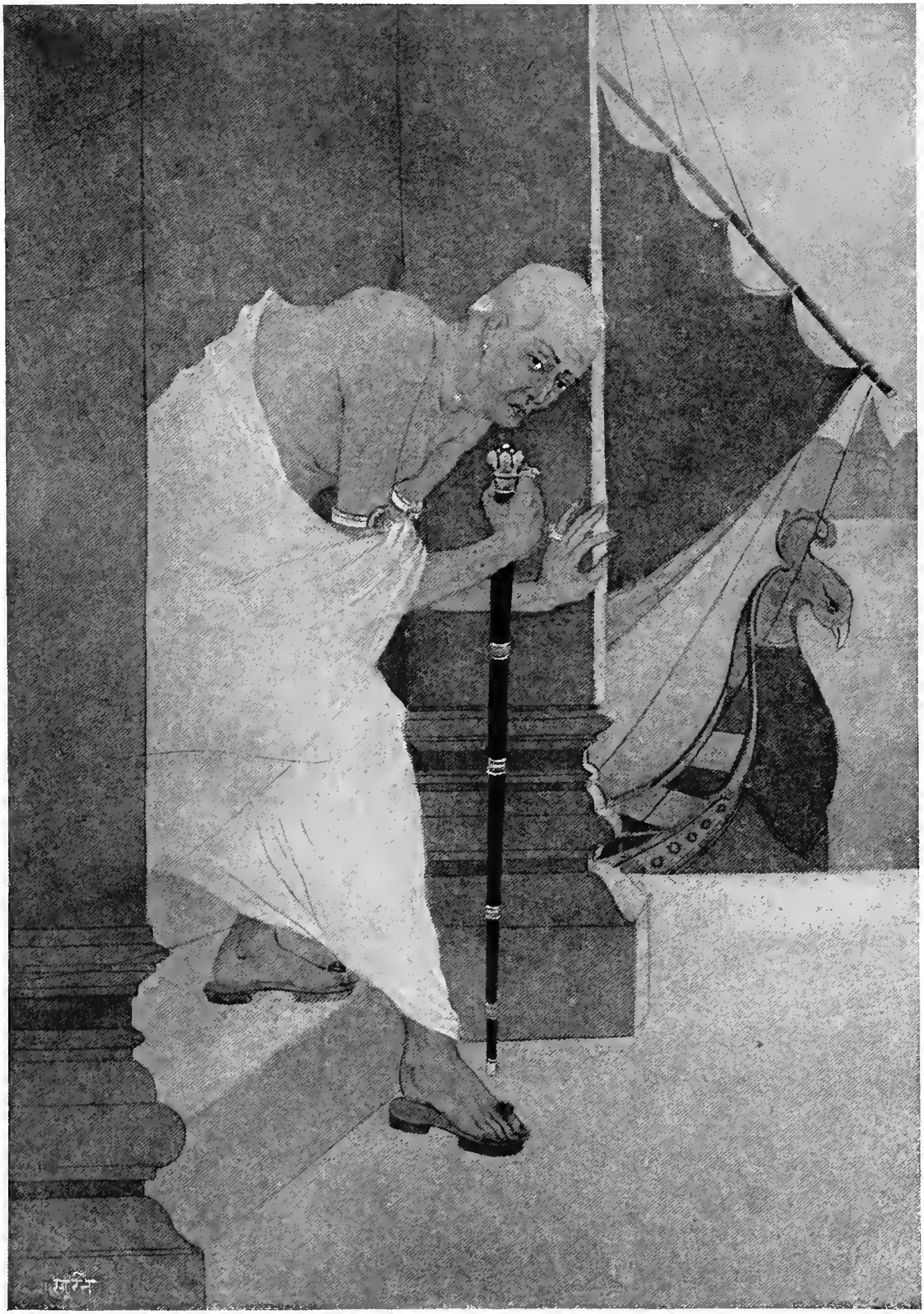
If neither Mr. Tagore nor his pupils have yet altogether attained to the splendid technique of the old Indian painters, they have certainly revived the spirit of Indian art, and besides, as every true artist will—invested their work with a charm distinctively their own. For their work is an indication of that happy blending of Eastern and Western thought, from the full realisation of which humanity at large has so much to gain. Mr. Kipling would persuade us that this is an unattainable consummation—a rather insular attitude

which can only promote prejudice and misunderstanding.

It is on the technical side that the wrong we have done to Indian art is most apparent and least excusable. It may be difficult to provide in a State educational system, especially under Indian conditions, that intellectual and spiritual stimulus without which no real art can ever be developed. As Emerson has truly said, art does not come at the call of a legislature—neither can a legislature entirely suppress it only by neglecting to take cognisance of the artistic faculties. But nothing can excuse the crushing out of all the splendid artistry, of the technical lore and skill of hand inherited from former generations—one of the most valuable industrial assets India possesses—simply from the want of an intelligent adaptation of official machinery for making use of it.

We often compare the British Empire with that of Rome. The Romans, like ourselves, were an inartistic people, but when they conquered Greece they utilised the creative genius of the vanquished for strengthening the bonds of empire, and through it provided a valuable guarantee for law and order in the place of a dangerous element of unrest and discontent. Akbar, the Great Mogul, pursued the same policy with wonderful success. We, on the other hand, through incurable Philistinism and a blind adherence to European precedent, prevent Indian artists from having any share in the building up of the empire unless they accept the

PLATE LXXVIII



THE FLIGHT OF LAKSHMAN SEN

humiliating conditions of abandoning all the traditions of their forefathers, and give Indians an education which leaves them no other intellectual distraction than that of politics.

But Indian art will not die, even though all the splendid artistry of former generations is utterly swept away. The thought-power which will revive it must be Eastern, not Western, and we shall only have ourselves to blame if, through our indifference or want of understanding, Indian creative thought serves the forces of disloyalty instead of providing a common meeting-ground where East and West may learn mutual respect and esteem.

By cutting off from Indian youth all the joys of true artistic culture, and depriving them of the moral influence of a sincere love of beauty we inevitably bring into the body politic a subtle but potent element of discord and discontent. Self-reliance and self-respect are the greatest boons we can confer upon India: they are essential factors in art-creation, and make stronger imperial ties than intellectual servility and insincerity.

One of the few hopeful signs for the future of Indian fine art is the growing appreciation of it marked by the recent inauguration in Calcutta of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, with Lord Kitchener as President and a number of distinguished Anglo-Indians and Indians as members. If the Society serves no other purpose than that of bringing together on an equal footing members of both communities, and of restoring to real Indian

artists their lost prestige, it will be a powerful influence for good in Bengal; and, by protecting during its infancy the new development of fine art in the Calcutta School, and creating thereby a new motive for intellectual and social intercourse, it will do much for promoting that mutual understanding between diverse races which is always the surest foundation of empire.

Should any of its members realise the potentialities open to them in the field of Indian art, the Society might create for itself a record for original research not less distinguished than that of the Asiatic Society; for the most interesting problems yet unsolved in the history of Asiatic culture are more artistic than archæological, and the history of one of the most pregnant epochs in the world's art still remains to be written.

APPENDIX

THE INDIAN PROCESS OF *FRESCO BUONO*

THE Indian process of fresco painting as still practised in Rajputana, the Punjab, and the United Provinces, has been lately revived in Bengal by the Calcutta School of Art. Modern fashions and modern bad taste have generally substituted insanitary European wall-papers for this most beautiful and permanent form of Indian mural decoration.

The chief difference between it and the Italian process of *fresco buono* is that the colours are united to the plaster ground by mechanical action (beating with trowel and polishing) as well as chemically, by the action of the lime. The Indian fresco is given a highly polished surface, which in the dust-laden atmosphere of India is a great advantage, as it prevents accumulations of dirt, and enables the wall to be cleaned with a dry duster or by syringing it with water.

For interior decoration the colours are absolutely permanent. The plaster is exceedingly durable, and, except when saltpetre (which eventually destroys any lime plaster) rises in the walls, it is not affected by a damp atmosphere. In the dry climate of Northern India it was often used for external decoration by the Moguls, and it is quite suitable for this on walls which are not fully

exposed to the monsoon rains, or are protected by a verandah.

Even when saltpetre rises in the walls, owing to the absence of an effective damp course, it is more durable than common plaster, and it can easily be repaired from time to time. But in this case an upper story, to which the saltpetre does not rise, is more suitable for pictures or for elaborate decorations. For native houses, where the inmates have not adopted the European habit of wearing boots, this plaster is strong enough to be used for floors; and formerly floors were sometimes painted in fresco, which, with its finely polished surface, possessed all the beauty of inlaid marble. The Jaipur lime, owing to its having a large percentage of alumina, makes an exceptionally strong and beautiful plaster.

The Preparation of the Lime for the Ground

The lime must be perfectly slaked to prevent blisters appearing in the ground. It must remain under water for at least a week, though a much longer time is desirable. Then mix with the lime a quantity of powdered limestone, or fine clean sand, double in weight of the dry lime. Stir the mixture, and add water to make it the consistency of mud. Grind the mixture on an ordinary curry-stone. This plaster can be used on brick or rough stone walls. When a wooden ground is used mix the plaster with sugar, powdered *methi* (Trigonell—*fœnum grecum*) and jute to prevent it from cracking.

The Laying of the Plaster Ground

The stone or brick walls must be well wetted, and while wet the prepared plaster is thinly and evenly laid over it. Drive the plaster well into the joints and crevices and beat it all over with a long strip of wood

used edgeways until it becomes slightly dry. Then wet the layer, and repeat the beating until the plaster is firm. Apply another thin coat of plaster, beating it well in the same way, until it becomes at least a quarter of an inch thick. Then level it carefully and let it dry completely. The operation lasts three or four days.

The Preparation of Lime for Fresco Ground

The lime for the final coating on which the painting is done requires very careful preparation. It must be perfectly slaked, and for this purpose the lime is sometimes kept under water for months: a year is said to be desirable for the very best work. Then curds are mixed with the lime in the proportion of half a seer of curds to half a maund of dry lime. Stir the mixture well, and let it stand under water overnight. Next day drain off the water and strain through a piece of fine cloth. Let it stand again under water till next day, and continue this process for at least a week. The purity of the lime will depend upon the number of times this operation is repeated. Care must be taken that the lime thus prepared is always kept under water; if allowed to dry it will be useless.

The Laying of the Fresco Ground

Wet a portion of this plaster ground prepared as above, as much as can be painted and finished in a day. If the ground is too wet it will come off with the rubbing-stone; if insufficiently the ground will dry too quickly and the colours will not be permanent. Then mix some of the plaster of the ground with the fine prepared fresco lime, adding water to make it the consistency of cream, and apply this mixture to the wet wall with a large brush; rub it well over the ground with a flat stone so

as to work it well into the surface. Give two or three coats, rubbing it with the stone every time. Then apply three or four coatings of the prepared fresco lime only, rubbing it as before with the stone. When it is a little dry and sticky polish it with an agate polishing-stone until the surface is quite smooth and glazed ; the ground is then ready for painting. Considerable practice and dexterity are needed in this polishing process.

The process for preparing the beautiful polished white walls which were formerly common in the best houses in Madras and Calcutta, was supposed to be a lost art until I pointed out that it was identical with that used for preparing walls for fresco painting. The walls in Government House, Calcutta, were lately renewed under Lord Curzon's orders by workmen imported from Jaipur for teaching fresco painting in the Calcutta School of Art.

The Painting

The drawing, first carefully made on paper, is transferred to the prepared wall by the usual method of pricking and pouncing the outlines. The colours are mixed with water, ground fine, and strained through a cloth. Gum is added to all the colours except black, which requires glue. The painting must be finished in one day, while the ground is wet, as in the Italian process of *fresco buono* ; but if necessary retouching can be done the following day, provided that the painting is kept wet by covering it with wet cloths. When the painting is finished, beat it all over very evenly with a small thick trowel until the surface is quite smooth. Then scrape the oily liquid from the inside of a cocoa-nut, and, after heating it, apply it to the surface of the painting and rub it gently with a dry, clean cloth. The painting must then be rubbed with a small agate polishing stone until it acquires a

surface like polished marble. When the plaster is thoroughly dry the colours are quite permanent, and the painting can be cleaned from time to time by syringing it with water or dusting it with a dry duster.

Colours used in Jaipur for Real Fresco

Hindustani name.	*English.*
Hazâ patthar.	Terra verte.
Pilâ patthar.	Yellow ochre.
Lâjward.	Ultramarine (lapis).
Hingûl.	Vermilion.
Sindûr.	Red lead.
Nil.	
Kajâl.	Lampblack.
Koelâ.	Ivory black.
Chûnâ.	Lime.

The following colours can also be used: Raw siena, burnt siena, raw umber, burnt umber, Naples yellow, Venetian red, green oxide of chromium, cobalt blue.

The Ajanta and Sîgiri Frescoes

The ground on which the Ajanta paintings were executed appears to have been composed of pulverised trap, mixed with clay and cow-dung, laid on the roughish surface of the rocks to a depth varying from a quarter to half an inch. Sometimes rice-husks were added, especially on the ceilings. Over this ground was laid the *intonaco* of this smooth plaster, about the thickness of an egg-shell, upon which the painting was done (Mr. John Griffiths, "Ajanta," vol. i. p. 18).

At Sîgiri the ground was a thickness of about half an inch of tempered earth and kaolin of a reddish brown

hue, strengthened with rice-husks and perhaps shreds of cocoa-nut fibre. Upon this were laid at least two coatings of white chûnâ (lime), a quarter to half an inch thick (Mr. H. C. P. Bell, "Journal R.A.S., Ceylon," vol. xv., p. 114).

Notes on Indian Painting Processes, supplied by Mr. Ishwary Prasad, Teacher in the Calcutta School of Art

Paper for Miniature Paintings

The papers used were of three kinds: (1) called *bavsâhâ*, made from crushed bamboo, (2) *tâtâhâ*, made from *tât*, or jute, (3) *tulât*, made from *tula*, or cotton.

A smooth enamelled surface was given to the paper by placing it face downwards on a polished stone and rubbing the back of it with a polisher.

Tracing Paper (*Charba*)

This was prepared from deer-skin. Drawings were transferred by pricking and pouncing with charcoal powder. For fine work the charcoal was made from the *arahar* plant (*Cajanus Indicus*); for ordinary work charcoal made from mango-tree twigs was used.

Brushes were made from the hair of a squirrel's tail. Worn brushes were carefully kept for fine outline work. Dr. Coomaraswamy says that in Ceylon brushes for drawing fine lines are made of the awns of *teli tana* grass (*Aristida adscensionis*), and are admirably adapted to their purpose.

The first outline was always made with Indian red (*gairika*—a red used by mendicants for colouring their cloths) used without gum. The finishing outlines were made with lampblack, prepared by burning a camphor wick in a mustard-oil lamp.

Mediums.—The mediums used with the colours were water, gum, glue, sugar, and linseed water.

Gold.—The best gold was known as Panna gold, obtained from the Panna State Gold Mines. The gold size was made by boiling fourteen ounces' weight of gum and two ounces' weight of sugar in four ounces of water; when cold it was ready for use.

The following are the technical names of the principal processes of painting:

Âbina.—Drawing a sketch of the picture with a brush dipped in water only; the paper, when dry, has a water-line impression which serves as a guide for future work (*ab*—water, *bina*—to see).

Khâkâ (form).—To give form to the water-line drawing with some mineral colour, Indian red being often used.

Rangamezi (colouring).

(*a*) *Dagina* (marking).—The different parts of the picture, such as the face, sky, trees, dresses, etc., are marked out with various colours.

(*b*) *Potna* (filling up).—The spaces thus marked out were filled up with colour-washes.

Golaî.—Gradating and softening off the colours.

Sâyâ-susma (shading).

(*a*) *Sâyâ.*—Shading the different parts of the picture with darker tones. *Sâyâ* touches are only put on the face, hands, feet, folds of the dress, and accessories such as furniture; never on the sky or on flat walls.

(*b*) *Susma.*—To use different colours in giving relief to an object.

Sia-kalam (ink-brush).—Finishing the whole picture with ink-lines of varying thickness and strength.

Gula-pamba (chrome yellow and Chinese white).—This was used instead of gold in painting jewellery, etc.

Sufâda.—To paint bright spots in the picture, such as the white of the eye, pearls, and jewellery, with touches of white.

Jarab.—In this process real pearls and precious stones were stuck on to the picture (see illustration, Plate LII.).

Grounds for tempera painting on cloth, wood, and walls:

Cloth.—For first-class work, boiled and liquefied *khoi* (parched paddy) mixed with gum $\frac{1}{16}$th part. For ordinary work, rice starch mixed with linseed water $\frac{1}{8}$th part, and gum $\frac{1}{20}$th part.

Wood.—Glue and sugar $\frac{1}{16}$th part, a pinch of alum and a tablespoonful of shellac, boiled together.

Walls.—Chalk and milk $\frac{1}{2}$ part, milk curd $\frac{1}{8}$th, sugar $\frac{1}{16}$th, and a little yellow ochre.

Dr. Waddell, in his "Lamaism in Tibet," p. 331, describes the method of preparing the ground for the sacred banners which are hung in Buddhist temples and monasteries:

"The cloth used is canvas or cotton, seldom silk. It is prepared by stretching it while damp on a wooden frame to which a margin of cloth is stitched, and its surface is then smeared with a paste of lime and flour, to which a little glue is sometimes added. On drying the surface is rubbed smooth and slightly polished by a stone, and the drawing is then outlined either by hand or with a charcoal crayon. In the more technical subjects a stencil plate is used."

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